TRAVELLER

MERCENARY BOOK 1: MERCENARIES IN THE FAR FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

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INTRODUCTION

The word 'mercenary' has unpleasant connotations for many but, in reality, mercenaries vary as much as any other group. A mercenary, correctly defined, is a military professional who serves a paymaster that is not their home government. Corporate security forces are, by definition, mercenaries as are members of a task force raised by a multi-government consortium to protect aid workers. These are honourable professions and mercenaries often outperform those who serve out of obligation to a government.

Despite this, mercenaries are often portrayed as being only interested in money and of dubious reliability. This is true of some, however mercenaries are in business like anyone else. A reputation for good service in difficult circumstances allows a unit to command a higher fee next time around. Mercenaries are thus fighting for themselves even when they are fighting for an employer and may choose to serve a bad master well for the sake of their reputation – a reputation that is as important as a commercial asset.

Mercenaries are often misused or mistreated by their employers. Some treat their hired solders as expendable cannon fodder or inferior to 'loyal citizens of the homeland' or 'warriors or the cause'. This is a common reason for mercenary disaffection, which leads to underperformance and sometimes even mutiny. On the other hand, mercenaries are not usually involved in the local political situation and may be more reliable than local troops. Those that think they can subvert a mercenary force by making a higher offer come up against the twin barriers of professionalism and regard for future contracts. Only the most desperate would hire a mercenary unit with a reputation for changing sides at the drop of a cheque.

The relationship between mercenaries and their patron can be a complex balancing act for both. The mercenaries have their unit's reputation to consider but will also be aware that they may be considered expendable. The patron must treat the mercenaries fairly if they are to remain loyal but may face criticism from their own forces for 'favouritism' towards outsiders.

For the ordinary soldier, the world of the mercenary can be quite simple; long periods of being available to do what the employer wants, some training and the occasional actual fight. Some missions are a bit tense but more or less safe, some become horrifyingly dangerous without warning. Much more time is spent standing ready than actually fighting and what happens above the mercenary's pay grade can usually be ignored.

Those who lead and command mercenary formations live in a far more complicated world. They may have to take part in the fighting but, for the most part, their job is to balance the requirements of the employer with what they have actually paid for, to ensure the force is capable of carrying out its mission and that there are no unpleasant surprises. More than one client has come up with the clever idea that if the mercenaries were to somehow be eliminated before the end of their contract they would not have to be paid. Most would not go this far but might be willing to use creatively interpreted contract clauses to wriggle out of part of a payment. The money is (usually) good but it is hard earned no matter whether the unit fights or not.

This book details how mercenary forces operate and fight across a range of environments and Tech Levels, along with rules on how to resolve missions and related incidents in the life of mercenaries. Additional rules deal with larger-scale conflicts and how the focus can shift from a high-level picture of a theatre of war to a crisis point involving a handful of mercenaries. In short, this volume is all about what an existing mercenary unit does. For information on how to raise and train a mercenary force, see *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Unit.*

CHAPTER-ONE

WARFARE IN 5-DIMENSIONAL BATTLESPACE

For the mercenary of the far future, warfare rarely takes place on a battlefield in the conventional sense. True, any engagement will have immediate surroundings that can be considered a battlefield, or 'battle area', and this space has the usual three dimensions of length, breadth and height. In very simple terms, a threat or target will be a certain distance away, possibly at a different elevation. In low-tech societies or when fighting the forces of one, a mercenary might not have to think about much else. However, this is rarely the case.

The 'fourth dimension' of the modern battlespace is the electromagnetic spectrum and, in some cases, the possibility of psionic abilities in the combat area. A mercenary operating against an enemy that possesses even basic electronic devices may have to consider the possibility that friendly communications are being intercepted or that the enemy can obtain information by undetectable means. Conversely, disrupting the electronic and similar capabilities of the enemy can cause havoc in a force that depends upon them.

The ‘fifth dimension’ that must be considered is technology. Infantry are not always merely infantry, for example. Troops equipped with mid-tech small arms can massacre a low-tech army under the right conditions but the presence of a handful of personnel equipped with TL12 weapons might tip the balance back the other way. Likewise personal protection, transportation and communications technology can be powerful ‘force multipliers’ despite them do not directly increasing striking power.

Thus mercenaries (and other combat forces) operate in a complex battlespace where distance and elevation to the target are only part of the problem. A wise commander considers what advantages can be gained by manipulation of the electromagnetic spectrum and how available technology will affect the engagement. By way of example, if an enemy with no weapons more advanced than a musket is defending a hilltop, a direct assault using unarmoured grav vehicles could end the engagement in moments. If the same enemy has managed to obtain a few shoulder-fired anti-vehicle weapons, and a quick course in how to use them, the assault would be suicide. Assumptions about what the enemy can and cannot do are highly dangerous.

THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

The availability of more advanced technology has a profound effect on warfare. Massed formations of infantry and cavalry, going at it with spear and lance, are a staple of large-scale conflict until reliable quick-firing firearms become available. However, if those weapons are available for Cr10000 a crate from the dodgy-looking free trader landed at the governmental palace, the game changes overnight. Militaries will obtain at least a few higher-technology weapons for their elite and will probably pick up cheap communications equipment too if they have any sense.

This is something the Referee must always keep in mind. ‘Technological surprise’ does sometimes occur, where a society has absolutely no idea that a weapon or capability exists. A handful of mercenaries carrying only handguns for self-defence and equipped with mid-tech radio equipment could completely alter the course of a low-mid tech battle or even an entire war, at land or at sea – and even more so if the enemy did not realise their opponents could communicate in real time over long distances. Likewise, the career of an alien Alexander or Napoleon could be cut short by a single marksman with a TL8 rifle.

Societies will adapt to the possibility of more advanced weapons as soon as they become aware of them. Low-tech does not translate to dumb and many of the solutions are obvious. Military formations will be more dispersed and strategy will adapt as well. Raiding, economic damage and harassment are viable strategies at any Tech Level, so low-tech societies might well adopt some form of special forces – and will obtain good weapons for them if at all possible. Asymmetric warfare will be the norm wherever technology intervenes and ‘tech recon’ of enemies is likely to be a standard procedure.

A team of mercenaries might arrive on a low-tech planet confident that they outgun entire nations, only to find there are serious opponents ready for them with mid-tech weaponry and a doctrine of raids and ambushes rather than marching obediently onto the mercenaries’ gun muzzles.

However, there is a limit to how much offworld technology can be imported by any given state. The nature of war is generally dictated by logistics, personal firepower, long-range bombardment capability and communications, not necessarily in that order. Small-scale operations may involve offworld equipment, and a scattering of imported devices can make a profound difference, but overall the ability to make war in the conventional sense is limited by locally available technology.

TL0-2

Hand weapons dominate at very low Tech Levels, backed up by primitive projectile weaponry such as bows or crossbows. These should not be underestimated either in terms of range or accuracy but they are generally ineffective against advanced body armour or vehicles and enormously outranged by even basic mid-tech firearms. Communications technology is limited to visual signals, mechanically amplified noise and personal transmission of messages. Primitive long-range communications such as wire telegraphs might be in use in some TL2 societies. Logistics depend on water vessels and animal-drawn carts.

Hand-to-hand combat is decisive in such low-tech societies, with shock action delivered by infantry or cavalry equipped with hand weapons. Even at the upper end of the tech scale weapons such as the bayonet and the sword see regular use on the battlefield. Projectile weapons are a supporting system, rarely decisive on their own, and artillery is cumbersome in the extreme. Highly structured societies may be able to field massed armies but smaller or loosely organised communities will typically rely on a small military elite backed up by poorly trained levies or militia at need. However, a segment of most low-tech societies will be highly effective with bows or primitive firearms, allowing the formation of hunter/sharpshooter units, which can still be effective even against forces employing advanced equipment.

The primary advantages mercenaries have in such an environment are communications and protection. Firepower is useful, as always, but a great deal can be achieved by a small force acting as a facilitator for local forces. Manoeuvres made by local opponents and allies will be slow and generally predictable, since forces must follow routes suitable for their pack animals. A small mercenary force could easily evade contact with significant local forces, especially if assisted by spotters with basic communications equipment. Fortifications capable of resisting local siege weapons are likely to be vulnerable to mid-tech shoulder-fired rockets – and so are enemy siege weapons. Even soft-skinned vehicles are largely immune to local weaponry and give a mercenary force the ability to evade contact or strike unexpectedly at a vulnerable point.

Large mercenary forces are unlikely to be hired for a conflict on such a world, since this represents unnecessary expenditure. A small team or unit up to company size is likely to be entirely sufficient for operations in this environment, although small forces are vulnerable to being overwhelmed if caught by local forces. Personal protection and small arms are entirely sufficient to inflict hugely disproportionate casualties on an enemy force, whilst longer ranged weapons may allow an enemy formation to be disrupted with impunity. A handful of marksmen can take out officers or suppress entry points to an installation, rendering the enemy impotent and perhaps forcing negotiations without inflicting heavy casualties. Likewise, anti-materiel weapons can disable enemy heavy weapons and even maritime vessels from far beyond the reach of any retaliation.

Overall, mercenaries working in a TL0-2 environment have enormous advantages over the local forces but should be aware that these can be offset inexpensively. A few rifles and personal communications sets will give the locals much the same advantages as offworld mercenaries would enjoy and they are unlikely to be foolish enough not to obtain them. Operations are likely to be on a small scale, in which there is a real possibility of encountering the local elite on near-equal terms – at least as far as equipment is concerned. Mercenaries worthy of their fee should still have advantages in terms of organisation, planning and a clearer understanding of what TL2+ equipment can do.

TL1 Warband

A group of Iron Age villagers have been sent to deal with a rumour of problems in a nearby area. They are led by a single professional warrior, who is equipped with a ringmail hauberk and a metal helm. The warrior is armed with a long cutting sword as a badge of rank but fights with spear and shield like those they lead. The other six members of the group are farmers and craftsmen, although some have seen action before. They are armed with spear and shield, mostly with a large knife or a hand-axe as a backup. Only one has armour; a leather jack reinforced with odd bits of metal. Two of the villagers have a smaller spear for throwing and one has a bow. This assumes no offworld weapons are present. It is possible the warrior might have obtained or been gifted with a firearm in which case they will use it with reasonable skill – although ammunition for practice will be in short supply.

This force will fight hand-to-hand, with bows and javelins employed on an individual basis as circumstances allow. Weapons handling is basic, other than the professional, but the warriors are capable of supporting one another and acting as a team at least some of the time. They fight in loose order, following the warrior's lead, and are likely to break and run if their leader is downed.

TL3-5

Once machinery and firearms are available locally, the situation changes for offworld mercenaries. Ground forces may still train to fight en masse against similarly equipped formations but the emphasis will tend to be on skirmishing and individuals or small units rather than neat ranks of close-order infantry. Sharpshooters will be available to local leaders, generally raised from hunters and similar groups with a tradition of marksmanship. Even at the lower end of the tech scale local forces will be less surprised at the mobility afforded by vehicles and may possess some of their own. Communications equipment of local manufacture may be available and leaders will be familiar enough with its capabilities to want more advanced units if they can be obtained.

TL3-5 forces will typically rely on animal power for mobility and logistics, although at the upper end of the tech scale motorised vehicles are likely to have completely supplanted animals. This is usually the case on developed, organised worlds whereas outback regions or worlds with a small industrial base may continue to use animals for many purposes. Massed close-order formations are survivable against TL3 and early TL4 opponents and may exist in such societies. Greater individual firepower rapidly results in an 'empty battlefield' where small units operate cooperatively but separately and make extensive use of cover.

At TL5, locally produced armoured vehicles and aircraft begin to appear, allowing the beginnings of mobile warfare. Doctrine still tends to be dictated by logistics, with emphasis on defensive lines or zones and rail or water links essential to strategic mobility. Anti-air weapons tend to be light and inaccurate – grouped machineguns, light autocannon and high-velocity guns capable of high elevation. Likewise, anti-armour weapons are basic, taking the form of mines, anti-armour rifles, satchel charges and repurposed artillery or anti-aircraft guns.

At the lower end of the technological spectrum, contracts are likely to involve infantry-type mercenary units, perhaps with some support weapons or vehicles. Few clients are likely to hire grav armour to take on musket-armed infantry, even if they want a quick decision. This is an example of the cost to capability tradeoff, which regulates the mercenary marketplace – a force of grav tanks might get the job done quickly but there is still the cost of transporting it and meeting maintenance costs. A more lightly equipped force will suffice and cost far less.

One result of this factor is that infantry-type units (perhaps with the odd piece of grav armour) can find employment in a wider range of situations than heavier forces but may face opposition that can put up a surprisingly good fight. Clients will hire mercenaries because they give enough of an advantage to achieve their aims. They will not pay several times as much for a kerb-stomp by a grossly overpowered force. This means the mercenaries are unlikely to have an entirely easy ride, even on low-mid tech worlds.

At the higher end of this part of the tech spectrum the opposition may possess basic combat aircraft, effective armoured vehicles and armoured maritime warships. This is generally not so much of a concern to mercenaries as the converse – if such weapons are present on-planet the locals will have something capable of taking them on. The chances of a light grav vehicle being hit by a crude shoulder-fired rocket or anti-tank rifle are slim but the threat exists.

Similarly, from late TL4 and onward, military doctrine becomes 'modern', in the sense that effective armoured vehicles, aircraft, artillery and radio-frequency communications are all factored into doctrine and training. Local troops can be expected to be aware of likely threats and have some means to counter them, at least marginally. In some ways this can be turned to an advantage – local communications networks can be easily penetrated by higher-tech equipment and crude electronic systems may be susceptible to jamming or decoys. However, the converse is that almost every local soldier will possess a weapon capable of penetrating light body armour at a considerable distance and tactics will be geared towards the same sort of combat mercenaries train for.

TL4 Mounted Patrol

A detachment of troops from the local Mounted Rifles force has been sent out on patrol, expecting to be out for a week or more. The patrol consists of 12 troopers led by a sergeant. They are equipped with a TL4 single-shot breechloading carbine as a primary weapon, backed up by a revolver for mounted skirmishing. Each member of the patrol also has a sabre in a saddle scabbard but these are rarely drawn except on ceremonial occasions. Personal protection is limited to a metal helmet, although before action troopers will roll their cloaks and strap them in place over the shoulder and upper chest on the left side. This is a holdover from the days of mounted sabre combat but the command 'roll cloaks!' is still a clear indication that the unit means business.

These professional soldiers normally dismount to skirmish with carbines, with some of their number holding the horses at the rear for a rapid repositioning, pursuit or retreat. The force is quite capable of fighting from horseback with carbine and pistol, and individuals may even resort to their sabres. On foot or mounted, the patrol fights in loose skirmishing order, either using cover or mobility to avoid enemy fire. They are disciplined enough to fight on if their leader is downed but more likely to make a fighting retreat after recovering as many casualties as possible.

TL6-8

TL 6-8 societies are capable of fielding forces that can provide effective resistance to high-tech mercenaries, at least to some degree. Even without imported equipment, local anti-armour and aerospace defence capabilities pose a credible threat to lightly equipped mercenary forces. Guidance and communication systems are easy to jam or spoof, making locally-produced missiles at best marginally effective but their warheads are sufficient to destroy a light armoured vehicle of any Tech Level. Shoulder-fired unguided rockets can be fielded in vast numbers if required.

An organised TL6-8 nation or world government will usually be able to deploy combined-arms ground forces supported by air and maritime assets. It may also be able to pose a threat to spacecraft using missiles and may possess nuclear weapons. Less organised forces will still be able to pose a threat to mercenary units with small arms and light support weapons. The prevalence of civilian vehicles allows the creation of what are known as 'technicals' – typically pickup trucks or SUVs with a light support weapon mounted on the back. Although unarmoured, such vehicles provide mobile firepower at a low price and are used by insurgent forces everywhere.

Depending on the perceived threat, TL6-8 forces may be skewed towards an offworld threat rather than on-planet warfighting. Balkanised worlds typically have forces designed to fight those of other nations, whereas single-state worlds tend to be more concerned with dealing with insurgencies or offworld threats. These forces will emphasise light, mobile elements rather than heavy tanks and artillery, although these may still be present. Aerospace defence will receive a large share of the military budget and troops will be equipped to take on forces of a higher Tech Level. This typically means large numbers of unguided rocket weapons, anti-materiel rifles and similar systems emphasising at least marginal capability against troops with high-tech body armour or light vehicles constructed at higher Tech Levels and therefore better protected than locally available equivalents.

Mercenaries operating in such an environment are almost inevitably outnumbered and must rely on their ability to bring superior firepower to bear at the critical point. Technological assistance enables the mercenary force to outthink and out-manoeuvre their opponents, whilst individual firepower is sufficient to outgun forces capable of bringing the mercenaries to action.

TL7 Infantry Section

A world government has organised its forces to deal with offworld threats and the occasional insurgency. This eight-soldier infantry section is intended for defensive operations in urban terrain against forces likely to have better vehicles, weaponry and protection. It has no organic transport but will normally be provided with light vehicles or a truck, if necessary. The section is divided into two squads of four. The 'rifle' squad is led by a corporal; the 'support' squad by a junior sergeant who is the section leader. Personal protection consists of a bulky and uncomfortable flak jacket and a metal helmet.

Three soldiers in the rifle squad are armed with fully-automatic assault rifles. One carries a lighter 'carbine' version of the rifle and a reusable rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launcher. This soldier is a designated grenadier who has displayed advanced skills but all are capable of using the launcher at need. Standard grenade loadout is one light anti-armour weapon posing a slight threat to a lightly armoured vehicle and one high-explosive/fragmentation grenade or one smoke grenade. This is carried by all four members of the squad.

Rather than a light automatic weapon the support squad centres on a 12mm anti-materiel rifle, of a type generally known as a 'crunch gun'. Usually firing armour-piercing or light explosive/incendiary ammunition this weapon can disable light vehicles with a lucky shot and poses a significant threat to combat armour or similar high-end personal protection. The gunner carries only a sidearm for self-defence but is assisted by a loader/spotter armed with the carbine version of the usual assault rifle. The section leader and one other infantryman are equipped the same as the riflemen but carry additional ammunition for the crunch gun instead of one of the RPG grenades.

This section is best suited to a low-mobility role, fighting defensively in urban terrain. Where combat against forces that do not have a technological advantage is expected the crunch gunner may be issued an assault rifle instead. The section is expected to function with limited initiative in a confused, cluttered combat environment. Its usual tactic is to find a position with good fields of fire and defend it, engaging enemy vehicles and armoured infantry as targets of preference.

TL9-10

TL9+ forces are likely to have grav vehicles available. These may be possessed by lower-tech forces as imports but until local facilities can produce spares, maintenance costs make it impractical to operate more than a handful. Grav vehicles revolutionise warfare, allowing rapid movement over most terrain and rendering many obstacles irrelevant. There is still a divide between ground combat assets and aerospace vehicles however; grav tanks can fly at any altitude but tend to hug the ground for protection.

Grav transport vastly enhances mobility in both the strategic and tactical sense. Strategically, logistics is more rapid and strikes can be launched almost anywhere. If the concept of mobility 'front lines' was challenged by aircraft and effective ground vehicles it is obliterated by grav transport. Instead, the theatre of war is defined by zones that can be effectively denied to enemy transport, zones where enemy transport can be challenged and zones where it can operate more or less with impunity. A fortified city or installation with good anti-aerospace and anti-armour defences becomes a safe zone for friendly forces but the area in between such zones can be intermittently very hazardous.

Tactically, the ability to move rapidly in a vertical plane changes urban and mountain combat considerably. A fortified position on a mountainside or in a tall building can be directly assaulted as readily as one at ground level providing suitable transport is available. It is common for mid-tech societies to mount aerospace defences atop tall structures without considering the possibility of assault from grav vehicles. Higher tech cultures are more wary and provide better defences for such positions.

Large-scale TL9-10 forces are typically characterised by a mix of wheeled and grav vehicles. Wheeled transport is far cheaper and well suited to many roles – particularly security and counter-insurgency. Grav vehicles are typically used by high-end striking forces. Tracked vehicles are rare above TL9, although they still have some applications.

Mercenaries operating in the TL9-10 environment are likely to face weapons capable of penetrating their armour and destroying their vehicles – indeed, many mercenary units are outfitted at this Tech Level and going up against their state-owned equivalents. Higher-tech units do exist but the cost of outfitting them pushes up the hiring cost to the point where most patrons simply cannot afford it. As a result TL9-12 is the common equipment level for mercenary forces, with odd pieces of more advanced equipment. Such a force represents a balance of 'hirability' with effectiveness.

TL9 Grav Cavalry Squad

A TL9 world government has equipped its forces mainly for security and defence of critical locations, which are by definition urban. The term 'cavalry' is used in some locations to refer to light armoured forces but in this case – like many others – it is applied to an infantry force with organic grav transports. These are lightly armoured vehicles capable of offering fire support to their infantry component.

The squad is organised in two elements. The vehicle crew are armed with submachineguns for self-defence and wear a lighter version of the body armour used by the infantry. The vehicle itself is a rather basic TL9 grav sled armoured against small-arms fire. The crew of two ride in the cab, with the vehicle commander operating a remote turret on the dorsal surface of the vehicle. This mounts a light laser cannon suitable for fire support against most targets and is capable of damaging lightly armoured vehicles. The cannon can also be slaved into an aerospace defence net controlled by a command vehicle, creating a potent anti-air and anti-missile capability.

The infantry component consists of five personnel equipped with advanced combat rifles and one armed with the support version of the same weapon. This has a heavier, longer barrel and larger ammunition supply, enabling it to act as a light machinegun or marksman weapon. The squad leader, a junior sergeant, usually partners the support gunner whilst the other riflemen operate as pairs.

This force is optimised for rapid movement and short, hard strikes, trained to operate amid the spires of a city and conducting vertical operations where needed. Most tasks require only one or two vehicles and their infantry complement, so training emphasises initiative and small-unit operations rather than large-scale cooperation. The overall force is efficient at the squad and platoon level but not well suited to large-scale warfighting.

TL11-12

Advancing technology does not bring with it enormous shifts in doctrine at TL11. The basic principles of warfare in the starfaring age are well established. Where budgets permit, 'Warfighting' formations are usually based around lift infantry – infantry formations with grav transport, which usually takes the form of armoured vehicles equipped with support and aerospace defence weapons. Most other transport is also grav-mobile, including logistics and artillery. Preferences vary, however, with some states deploying fast, light grav-mobile striking forces and others preferring much heavier units.

Wheeled vehicles are used by less affluent powers but as a general rule the front-line forces of a government will be grav-mobile, with budget determining size and type of forces used. A few light grav tanks is typically seen as a better investment than a larger force of wheeled or tracked fighting vehicles, although these are common in a second-echelon role. Small states may have a hodgepodge of obsolescent equipment bought at a discount offworld, or a mess of different designs obtained on a one-off basis.

The main development in this era is in the field of high-energy weapons. Man-portable plasma guns and vehicle-mounted fusion guns increase the firepower available to ground forces by a significant margin and their tendency to produce secondary radiation imposes a need for enhanced personal protection. As a result infantry forces tend to become smaller but more heavily armoured, at least in front-line roles, with supporting troops often issued lighter protective equipment, which still offers some defence against radiation and chemical/biological hazards.

Whilst crude forms of battle dress – powered armour – are possible at TL11-12, the industry standard is combat armour. Essentially a heavily armoured vacc suit, combat armour incorporates sensors and information-sharing systems, enabling an infantry force to operate closely together and coordinate with other arms. High-capability secure communications ensure that what one soldier can see is shared among all other personnel and vehicles that may need the information. By the use of remote sensor platforms, a force can 'see the back of the hill' under most circumstances. However, over-reliance on this sort of technology can render poorly trained forces vulnerable to disruption or deception.

The cost of maintaining an effective front-line warfighting capability is such that many nations or world governments do not attempt to do so. Instead the emphasis is on lightly equipped security forces, with a small elite equipped to a high standard. If the prospect of a major war seems remote, expensive military equipment becomes a luxury. This does mean that as tensions rise there is a scramble to obtain suitable weaponry and train troops to use it. Mercenaries can find plenty of employment in this marketplace as trainers or leaders for the local formations, or in some cases as replacements. Some governments maintain a security force and little more than a framework for warfighting, to be filled out with whatever mercenary units are available.

TL10 Insurgent Band

Insurgencies arise for all manner of reasons and are rarely equipped in a uniform manner. Vehicles, in particular, are typically modified from civilian models or captured in a damaged condition and pressed into service for lack of anything better. This group sees itself as something of an elite among the insurgents, having made a couple of effective raids against 'soft' targets and obtained some military hardware. In reality, they are a band of gunmen capable of basic small-unit tactics but lacking the skills of trained professional soldiers.

The band is equipped with two civilian air/rafts, which have been armoured by attaching metal plates and placing sandbags in the passenger well for protection from upward fire. This makes the vehicles slow and clumsy but they still provide much better mobility than ground vehicles. Both are fitted with improvised pintle mounts, one of which carries a TL9 machinegun. The other has a crude laser support weapon thrown together from components of several laser rifles.

The insurgents are armed with a mix of civilian and military weapons. These range from advanced combat rifles to snub pistols stolen from a starport security locker. Some of the rebels have chest and limb protectors created by breaking up captured combat armour suits but most have no personal armour. Explosives, grenades and the like are also in short supply and ammunition is a constant problem due to the array of weapons in use. Nevertheless, this band is capable of striking unexpectedly and escaping before reinforcements can reach the combat area.

TL13+

Advancing technology produces refinements rather than revolutions for the most part and military forces are no exception. Gauss weapons are commonplace as small arms and light support systems, with man-portable plasma guns in use by some forces. Fusion guns gradually take over the direct-fire support role as they become lighter and more portable.

The introduction of reliable powered armour – battle dress – is not as revolutionary as its capabilities might suggest. Battle dress is useful for assault formations, which can choose when and where to begin their engagements but keeping it in the field for an extended time is expensive and imposes a heavy logistics overhead. Maintenance and support facilities are expensive and must be located close to the combat area. This in turn requires heavy protection, since eliminating a battle dress support element will result in the battle dress equipped unit being forced to withdraw.

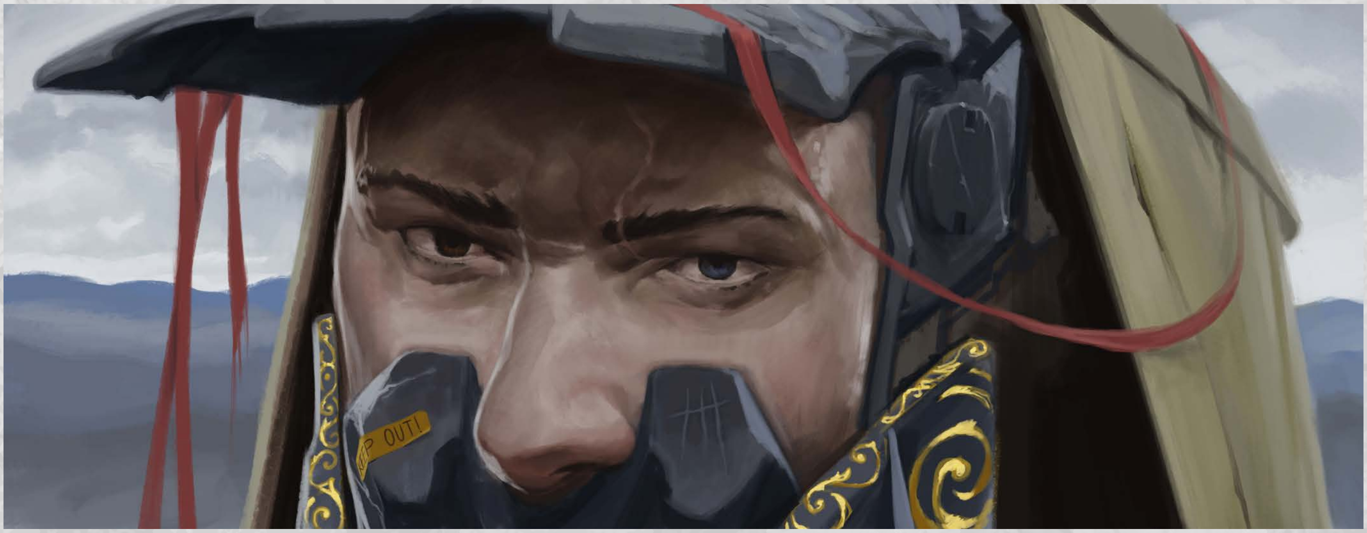
The prevalence of high-maintenance equipment creates additional opportunities for asymmetric warfare. An insurgent force or overmatched government might not be able to take on front-line enemy forces and win but crippling the support elements can tip the balance of a conflict. Likewise, high-end formations are often tasked with breaking through or bypassing front-line enemy forces to hit the supports. Kicking out the props in this manner is effective in all conflicts where technological systems are in use but it becomes ever more critical as higher-technology equipment is used. Small mercenary units can command a high fee for a 'striker' contract aimed at shifting the strategic balance in this manner during or just prior to a conflict.

TL14 Assault Infantry Section

This 10-soldier section is organised along standard 3-element lines. The 'command' element consists of a junior sergeant acting as section leader and a support gunner armed with a man-portable fusion gun. The two 'manoeuvre' elements each consist of four troopers in battle dress, three armed with gauss rifles and one with a support variant of the same weapon.

The section is capable of sustained combat, if 'sustained' means several hours, but would normally lead an assault on a specific section of the enemy defences before falling back for recharge and maintenance. Operations can be made with or without armoured or artillery support – danger close means something different when the friendlies are impervious to artillery fragmentation. However, suits can be damaged in small ways, eventually leading to failures or expensive replacements so as a rule they are deployed selectively and with solid planning.

When suited up the 10 troopers of the section are an extremely potent force but every in-suit hour requires a considerable amount of down time during which the battle dress is out of commission. This section requires a dedicated team of technicians with cradles and workshops for the armour, plus of course a security element if the unit is forward deployed. The cost of all this, plus the suits themselves, places massed battle dress formations out of the reach of most governments. Small units like this one may be deployed at crisis points or to deliver a decisive stroke but mercenaries are unlikely to face whole armies equipped in this manner.



CHAPTER-TWO

KEY CONCEPTS

In order to resolve the raising, maintenance and operation of mercenary formations it is necessary to use some concepts not dissimilar to those found in the *Naval Campaign Sourcebook*. Attempting to play out every single incident or financial decision – and especially trying to keep accounts for the unit – would simply be too time-consuming. It is reasonable for a lone Traveller to keep track of ammunition and rations when on an adventure somewhere but doing the same for several hundred mercenaries with vehicles and support equipment is not feasible. On the other hand, the pressure of logistics is a driving force in warfare and must be accounted for, and the costs of maintaining equipment force a mercenary unit to keep finding new jobs. Without these factors the Travellers will have it all too easy – and the mercenary life is not supposed to be easy!

TICKETS AND ADVENTURES

In mercenary terms, a ticket is a contract or similar document that spells out what the mercenaries are expected to do and what they get for doing it. The mechanics of tickets in-game are dealt with on page 38 but the key concepts are detailed here. In this context, an 'adventure' is any incident played out in detail using the standard *Traveller* rules, whilst other terms are used for those matters that can be abstracted.

A ticket will specify the size and possibly type of unit required, the sort of operations that are to be carried out and some additional information if necessary. Often this is the only information made public when someone is hiring mercenaries. Those who want to know more will have to show they have a suitable unit for the ticket before the client will reveal further details. The remainder of the necessary information will be laid out in a few paragraphs for the consideration of the potential mercenary and if they are hired there is usually a lot of additional detail to be delivered in briefings or information packages. Many clients are secretive or even slightly deceptive with the public parts of a ticket – after all, if the potential target can read on a public hiring board that they are about to be attacked by a mercenary force, the operation may not go all that smoothly.

UNIT TYPE AND SIZE

Mercenary forces vary considerably but most parallel one of the standard unit sizes used by many militaries. A ticket will usually specify the unit size on the assumption that the force will be of suitable composition to get the job done. A force with an entirely different size and composition can bid for a ticket and may get it if the force's representatives are able to show they can provide the service required. What matters for the client is that the outcome is provided; the details are not usually of great interest.

Unit Size (Field Formations)

Unit Size	Composition (Infantry)	Average Unit Size	Hardware
Squad, Team, Single Piece of Hardware	2–6 infantry personnel. Squad-level support weapons if appropriate.	4	1 vehicle or similar asset
Section/Lance	6–12 infantry personnel.	8	2–3 vehicles or other assets
Platoon	20–50 infantry personnel. Platoon level support weapons if appropriate.	35	3–5 vehicles or other assets
Company	75–200 infantry, probably with some support such as an artillery weapon or a light armoured vehicle as a fire support platform.	150	12–18 vehicles or other assets
Battalion	400–800 infantry with basic combined-arms capability including artillery weapons, fire support platforms and electronic warfare systems.	600	50–80 vehicles or other assets

Most mercenary forces consist of infantry and support, although there may be specialist artillery, armoured, engineering and electronic warfare forces. Mercenary logistics and even medical formations are available for hire in some regions, although these tend to operate in major war zones most of the time. The assumption when a client specifies a unit type is typically an infantry force with sufficient vehicles to provide mobility and perhaps fire support. Additional capabilities such as artillery, armoured combat vehicles and the like may be part of the get-it-done package but the exact composition can vary considerably.

The Unit Size (Field Formations) table serves as a general guide to unit sizes, although often a piece of equipment can – if handled correctly – replace a segment of the force. The table below gives an indication of the typical size of military forces. A formation that is primarily composed of people, such as an infantry, assault, pioneer or a similar force uses the infantry column. Those where vehicles (for example tanks or nuclear dampers mounted on grav trucks) or large pieces of hardware (such as unpowered artillery pieces or static aerospace defence weapons) are the unit's main asset use the Hardware column. In this case, an appropriate number of crew for the vehicles is assumed to be present but not additional maintenance and workshop personnel. The unit leader's actual rank title can vary considerably but responsibilities are about equal.

A client will expect a force capable of doing the work of the formation that was hired but will not usually be picky about exact composition. Thus if an infantry battalion turns out to include a platoon of artillery weapons instead of some of its footsoldiers this will not raise issues unless the unit fails to fulfil its contract. In that case there may be legal issues or other reprisals if the client feels the unit was misrepresented.

Unit Strengths

Unit strengths can vary from one culture to another and different names may be used. However, for the purposes of mission and combat resolution standardised unit sizes are given. An alien warband with a strength of 82 personnel is closest to a company in size so would be treated as one for resolution purposes.

Unit strengths are not based on any particular Terran military of any particular era but on a rough average of typical units, rounded to make calculations simpler. For most field units a general rule of 'fours' is applied – a combat unit will typically have four times the personnel level of the next size down, plus a small number of command and miscellaneous personnel.

A 'reinforced' unit may be up to 50% larger than the average size for the type. Thus a reinforced company might contain up to 225 personnel. Whether or not a 190-soldier company counts as reinforced depends on its organisation and equipment level. If it is well set up to take advantage of the extra personnel and equipment it can be counted as a reinforced company. If it is simply a big infantry company the extra personnel are not such a major asset, although the force may count as 'overstrength' at the Referee's discretion. The effect of these considerations on combat is discussed on page 77.

Most clients will query the situation if a unit varies too much from the expected composition and may declare the contract void if the unit is clearly not what was hired. A 'tank company' that has just two tanks and several civilian vehicles with improvised weapons cannot do the work it was hired for and will see its contracts voided – if its members are lucky.

Other terms are commonly used for some of these formations but it is desirable to have a baseline terminology to which other terms can be compared. A unit composed of multiple asset types is commonly termed a battlegroup, with size indicated by one of the standard types noted above. Thus a company battlegroup is roughly the size of a company and will probably have 3–5 platoon-sized sub-units but might include a mix of armoured combat vehicles, infantry and artillery weapons plus a combat engineering detachment.

A force is sometimes referred to as being 'reinforced', which can either mean it has higher capabilities than a standard unit of its type or that it has additional sub-units making it larger than average. An infantry force with five platoons of infantry and a light grav tank platoon might refer to itself as a reinforced infantry company or possibly as a reinforced company-sized infantry battlegroup. A reinforced version of a standard unit can be up to 50% larger than the average size for that unit and still function using the same command structure. If it grows beyond this it will start to have command and control issues and need reorganising, possibly as a unit of the next size up.

Mercenary forces above the size of a company are rare; divisional or larger forces extremely so. So many mercenary units are formed at company size that the term 'mercenary company' is used interchangeably with 'mercenary unit' or 'mercenary force'. Company-sized and smaller formations can find work more readily than large formations, although those that do exist command huge fees and can alter the balance of power in a region.

Sub-Units

A formation will be subdivided into sub-units of the next size down, which will also contain sub-units. For example, a battalion will contain several companies, possibly with some smaller units attached directly to the

Unit Composition

Unit Size	Typical Composition	Leader's Rank
Squad, Team, single Vehicle or piece of Hardware	2–6 personnel organised as a single unit, 1 vehicle or similar asset	Corporal
Section (infantry), Lance (vehicle), Division (artillery)	2–3 squads plus possibly a command element or 2–3 vehicles or other assets	Lance-Sergeant
Platoon (infantry or vehicles), Battery (artillery)	3–5 squads or similar elements or 3–5 vehicles or other assets	Second Lieutenant or Lieutenant
Company	3–5 platoons of personnel and/or hardware	Captain or Major
Battalion	3–5 companies of personnel and/or hardware	Lieutenant-Colonel or Colonel

Higher Formations

Unit Size	Typical Composition	Leader's Rank
Brigade	2–4 battalion equivalents with some additional fire support or artillery elements, and probably an integral logistics capability. Brigades are usually of a common force type such as infantry or armour.	Brigadier or Brigadier-General
Division	2–4 brigade equivalents and some attached formations including a mix of asset types. A combat division will almost always be a combined-arms force with infantry, armour and artillery plus supporting assets.	Major-General
Corps	2 or more division equivalents with full combined-arms capability.	Lieutenant-General
Army	2 or more corps and multiple smaller formations.	General

headquarters. Sub-units of the next size down are referred to as 'major sub-units' and their fate is significant to that of the force as a whole. Smaller sub-sub-units will not be so significant. Thus if a one of a battalion's companies (the next size down so a major sub-unit) is mauled, this may affect morale. A single platoon meeting the same fate will not have such a serious effect. Personnel will still care, of course, but a mangled platoon will not shake the confidence of a battalion the way the loss of one of its major sub-units would.

Unit Type

As already noted, the assumption is that the force will be suitable to the task at hand and that usually means a primarily infantry unit with supports and vehicles as appropriate. Some mission types are better suited to some force compositions than others. For example, striker missions require transport and may be better suited to a force geared up for high-intensity, short-term combat. Combat-armoured infantry riding lightly armoured transports, with a mix of light grav tanks and fire support grav sleds might be well suited to this role but too expensive for a security deployment. The latter requires more boots on the ground, with light vehicles rather than armoured combat platforms. Artillery weapons are little use in a security context, at least most of the time, so an artillery-heavy formation represents an addition to costs without much in the way of benefits. The composition of mercenary forces tends to be very lean as a result of these market forces, whilst at the same time it is desirable to have some all-arms capability – just in case.

The Unit Types table shows the most common military formations. Many other possibilities exist. Note that not all of these forces are likely to be encountered on the mercenary circuit; they are included for reference in case they are encountered in the field. Note that the term 'organic' does not refer to animals; in this context it means the unit has its own assets permanently attached.

Unit Types

Type	Notes
Expert/ Specialist	Usually a small team of personnel specialising in a particular field such as assassins, bodyguards, cyber-warfare or some similar area of expertise.
Security	Lightly armed personnel specialising in peacekeeping, bodyguard, population-pacification and similar paramilitary areas.
Infantry	Typical footsoldiers, without organic transport assets but with the usual complement of man-portable support weapons such as heavy machineguns, mortars and the like.
Light Infantry	Footsoldiers without organic transport assets, and with little heavy equipment. Light infantry can be easily transported by other assets.
Heavy Infantry	Footsoldiers without organic transport assets with more than the usual complement of heavy weapons and heavier personal protection. Heavy infantry are normally best deployed for defensive operations.
Close Assault	Infantry specialising in close-quarters combat in cluttered or close terrain such as cities or installations.
Armoured Infantry	The term ‘armoured infantry’ is occasionally used to refer to an infantry force with a high proportion of supporting tanks or heavy armoured vehicles such as tank destroyers. It is more commonly applied to units equipped with powered personal armour.
Motorised Infantry	Motorised infantry has an organic transport element, composed of soft-skinned or very lightly armoured vehicles, which can mount support weapons.
Mechanised Infantry	Mechanised infantry has an organic transport element composed of armoured vehicles, usually mounting significant support weaponry.
Lift Infantry	Lift infantry has an organic transport element composed of grav-mobile armoured vehicles, usually with significant support weaponry.
Cavalry	The term ‘cavalry’ is usually applied to a force made up of infantry and lightly armoured combat or transport vehicles who work in close conjunction.
Air Cavalry	Air cavalry are rarely encountered on the mercenary circuit. The term is generally applied to forces that use helicopters for mobility, although some units that make use of light grav vehicles adopt the name.
Mounted Cavalry	The term cavalry is often used to refer to troops who make extensive use of vehicles. ‘Mounted cavalry’ explicitly refers to troops using horses or similar riding animals.
Mounted Infantry	Mounted infantry use riding animals for mobility. They are rare on the mercenary circuit, to say the least, but may be encountered as opposition.
Armoured Reconnaissance	Armoured reconnaissance formations typically use light, fast grav tanks and similar vehicles. In addition to their reconnaissance role they can act as a strike force or add firepower to an infantry formation.
Grav Gunship	Grav gunship formations are direct-fire support units or specialist grav tank-hunter units best suited to defence of urban areas.
Grav Armour	Grav armour formations are equipped with grav tanks and may have some lift infantry elements for support and security.
Artillery	Artillery formations come in various types – towed, mechanised and grav for the most part.
Aerospace Defence	Aerospace defence formations may be very light – such as a specialist infantry formation equipped with shoulder-fired missiles – but most have mobile or semi-mobile heavy weapons for long-range defence against aircraft, missiles, grav craft and even starships.
Combat Engineer	Combat engineering formations undertake construction and demolition tasks in a combat zone. They typically have a mix of ground and grav vehicles.

Exactly what category a unit falls into depends upon its composition and intended role. For example, a grav-cavalry battalion might comprise three companies of lift infantry, each with a few armoured reconnaissance vehicles mixed in to increase firepower, plus a grav gunship company. This force can carry out the grav cavalry role in battalion strength and is justified in using the term. A similar unit that has grav transport for some of its infantry and uses wheeled vehicles for the rest would not, as it is not fully grav-mobile.

Support Level

Normally a ticket does not specify who is to provide support for the mercenary force. If so, the mercenaries themselves are expected to bring with them everything they need for the operation or to obtain it whilst in position. This is common with short-term missions and is often convenient for both parties – the mercenaries can source their own ration packs, vehicle spares and ammunition for whatever weaponry they like to use rather than a client who may not have the right contacts.

Sometimes a ticket specifies limited support. This usually means locally available resources such as rations, boots and similar mundane items that do not need to be compatible with the mercenaries' own equipment, plus limited access to spares and maintenance facilities. Known as a 'thin ticket', this arrangement is usually little more than a convenience for both parties and is usually offered as a minor incentive rather than a reason to reduce the ticket fee. It does reduce overheads a little but the main benefit for the mercenaries is the ability to 'borrow' maintenance facilities on an occasional basis. This is sometimes possible anyway with a bit of negotiation but a contract clause allowing so many hours of workshop time can be highly useful.

A ticket may specify full support. This is rare and typically only offered on long-term security or training contracts, or where a mercenary force will be integrated into one set up locally. Known as a 'fat ticket', this arrangement makes the client responsible for maintenance and upkeep costs, and more importantly making sure supplies and ammunition actually reach the mercenary unit. Fat tickets are a pleasant option when spending several months training up a local force or acting as a garrison on a world that does not have a military of its own but they can be more of a headache to administer than they are worth. This is particularly true where the client is incompetent, corrupt or finds it difficult to obtain the right supplies. On the plus side, failure to deliver on a fat ticket is grounds for the mercenary unit to terminate the contract without being considered to have defaulted on it.

In some cases a contract may include a 'make-good' clause. Essentially this requires the client to replace some or all of the equipment rendered unserviceable and personnel lost in the course of the ticket. This is usually offered as an incentive to take on a risky mission or one with a high probability of heavy losses. Clients are generally unwilling to commit to such a clause and offering it too readily is generally seen as a 'red flag' by experienced mercenary commanders.

PLAYING OUT A TICKET

A ticket is the document that defines what the mercenary force is to do and what they get for it, and often the word 'ticket' is used for the gameplay that ensues as the situation is resolved. Some aspects of the ticket can be abstracted and it is often desirable to do so. The term 'ticket' is in some ways synonymous with 'mission' in the *Naval Campaign Sourcebook* but there are certain differences. In a naval campaign a ship and its crew will be given a lengthy mission with multiple components, each known as a Mission Segment. Since groundside operations happen on a different time scale, some terms have different meanings.

A Ticket can be subdivided into Missions, each of which is a self-contained undertaking. A Ticket may be a single Mission, especially where mercenaries are engaged to carry out an immediate raid or other short-term action, but more commonly there will be multiple Missions before the Ticket is concluded.

A Mission is a self-contained set of tasks intended to lead to a goal. It need not be related to combat; a delegation sent to negotiate a supply contract is carrying out a Mission as is a party out scrounging for spares and supplies. Several Missions can be underway at once but obviously individual members of the unit can only do one thing at a time.

Missions can be further subdivided into Operations. An Operation is a single task such as capturing a terrain feature or browbeating a local official into allowing the unit to park its tanks in the municipal pleasure gardens. Where a Mission can have multiple aims an Operation almost always has a single primary goal.

Any Mission or Operation can lead to an Adventure, in the sense that it can result in a situation that is played out using the standard *Traveller* rules. This often happens when something unexpected occurs. These situations are termed Incidents and do not necessarily have to be played out in detail. Sometimes the Travellers will hear about something going unexpectedly wrong or right but not be in a position to do anything about it. The decision whether or not to play out an Incident falls equally upon the Referee and Travellers, and depends entirely upon circumstances. Some groups of Travellers will want to play out every incident; others may be fixated on getting to the end of the ticket and collecting their payment. Neither approach is wrong but for a mercenary campaign to remain interesting the Travellers will need to get involved at some point and conversely they should not become bogged down in minutiae.

Missions and Adventures

The difference between a Mission and an Adventure is fundamental to the resolution system presented here. An Adventure in this context is a self-contained piece of gameplay that is interesting, challenging, threatening and hopefully rewarding. Multiple Adventures can occur during the course of a Mission and parts of a Mission can go well or badly without being played out as an Adventure.

To put this another way, a Mission is what the mercenary unit or part of it set out to do; Adventures are the interesting bits of what happens along the way.

The rules in this book will allow the Referee to resolve the routine parts of a mercenary ticket and determine whether they generate incidents that might be worthy of an adventure. This could be something big, like a low-intensity conflict suddenly expanding and drawing in many more forces but a complex problem involving surly villagers who might or might not support the insurgents could also provide a great many role-playing opportunities. Even for mercenary soldiers, gunplay is not always the answer.

The mechanics presented in this book make use of a number of key terms and concepts that are introduced here and fully explained later. In order to keep these concepts as closely aligned as possible with the similar ones used in the *Naval Campaign Sourcebook*, we will use the term ‘company’ to refer to a mercenary force but this does not mean the force is necessarily of the same composition or organisation as an infantry company.

Company Efficiency Index (CEI): This is an indicator of the overall ability of a mercenary force and any of its members to deal with situations. It is used when abstracting events that affect the unit as a whole.

Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI): Where various factors modify CEI on a long-term basis but do not change the effectiveness of the force permanently, ECEI is used instead of CEI.

Detachment Efficiency Index (DEI): This is an indicator of the overall ability of a sub-unit or a detachment broken off from the main force. For example, if the headquarters detachment comes under attack the effectiveness of its response will be determined by its DEI, which might be greater or less than that of the unit as a whole. DEI is used when abstracting the results of smaller events.

Ticket Success Index (TSI): This is an indicator of how well the mission has gone. It reflects whether the mercenaries achieve their mission objectives and how well those objectives are accomplished.

Morale (MOR): This is an indicator of how content and confident the mercenaries are. A force with a low MOR will not be steady in action and MOR 0 will likely result in mutiny.

Reputation (REP): This is an indication of how well regarded the unit is in terms of reliability and competence. It is primarily used when negotiating with a client or opposing force.

Ticket: The overall task set for the mercenaries.

Mission: A self-contained set of tasks carried out by the mercenary unit or part of it.

Operation: A task carried out by the mercenary force or a detachment of it. There are usually several Operations in any given Mission.

Incident: A noteworthy occurrence that may be good, bad or neutral.

Adventure: Something unusual that happens during a mission, requiring the focus to shift from abstracted resolution to conventional roleplaying.

CHAPTER-THREE

TRAVELLERS IN A MERCENARY CAMPAIGN

A mercenary campaign is likely to revolve around professional soldiers, but not every Traveller has to have military experience. Even the most battle-hardened force has a place for noncombatants – lawyers, administrators, negotiators and hackers, to name a few. Some mercenary units are geared towards other forms of conflict such as cyber or economic warfare, although there will still usually be combat specialists in the unit.

History has shown that military forces need strong discipline and a clear chain of command. A band of warriors can be highly effective up to a point but ultimately will be beaten by a more disciplined and organised force. Thus a mercenary campaign will put Travellers in a position where they must obey (and probably also issue) orders. This may not be to the liking of some Travellers. If so, there are many semi-autonomous roles available in a mercenary force – snipers, scouts, electronic warfare or cyber-warfare wizards and the like. A certain amount of leeway can be granted to such talented people but mavericks who continually ignore the chain of command or are insolent to superiors will be corrected or removed from the force.

It is possible that mercenary Travellers are still in service. Normally, Travellers muster out of their previous careers before beginning play but this is not necessarily the case with a mercenary campaign. A period spent in the Army career (and possibly certain others) could represent working as part of a mercenary unit rather than the army of the Traveller's home government. However, it is simplest to complete Traveller creation up to the end of the last term and take all benefits accrued along the way even if the Traveller is still serving in the same unit.

The Travellers should be in the position of being decision-makers unless they really do not want to be. A campaign following the adventures of a lowly infantry squad could be very interesting but for the most part the Travellers will be leaders – if not the actual commanders – among their mercenary unit. The unit's commanding officer may or may not be one of the Travellers. This is generally desirable for relatively small units – up to company size – where the commanders are likely to be involved in any fighting but for larger formations the senior officers are likely to be planning and organising rather than getting their hands dirty.

Playing such officers is more likely to be an exercise in politics and diplomacy than gunplay, which might be exactly what the Travellers want. If not, they should be the decision-makers of a part of the force that often acts autonomously. These Travellers will be given a task and must use their initiative to get it done, often with little or no assistance from the rest of the force. In effect, the Travellers may be leading a company-sized force despite them being part of something much greater. This approach is also useful if the Travellers are vigorously opposed to making business decisions but if they will not take responsibility for running the unit they cannot complain if they are forced to operate on a shoestring.

Decision-Makers

The Travellers should hold important positions within their unit but that does not always translate to high rank or command responsibilities. An ordinary soldier who has repeatedly refused promotions may be the actual leader of their platoon, in that the officer is wise enough to follow the Traveller's lead so long as the Traveller is careful not to challenge the officer directly.

As a general rule, the Travellers should be the people who solve problems for their force. A deadly sniper might not be high in the chain of command but may well be the operative sent to 'make that problem go away and don't tell me the details'. Likewise the senior NCO in a unit is not an officer but would probably be consulted for advice when necessary. On the other hand some of the most senior officers in a force are constantly in the presence of people who outrank them and never get to exercise their own initiative.

Thus Travellers should be assigned roles where they get to make decisions rather than simply being given the highest-ranking positions in their force.

ASSIGNING ROLES

Assigning roles to the Travellers can sometimes be easy – and sometimes it is anything but. If the Travellers are raising their own mercenary force they will make all the decisions about who is in charge of what and the Referee need not worry about it. If the Travellers join an existing force things are slightly different. They will need to be slotted in where their skills and experience make a good fit.

The rank a Traveller is assigned in a mercenary unit may not match the rank they attained in their previous career. A Traveller who joins a unit will be given a rank appropriate to their responsibilities and the size of the force. This may be equal to or lower than their previous rank; only rarely will it be higher. A few mercenary units have their own training programmes and some make use of independent mercenary training institutions but for the most part people are recruited to do what they already know how to do from their prior service.

Experience gained on the job may result in promotion once the Traveller has been with the unit for a while but opportunities are limited – especially in a small unit. Mercenaries can move from one force to another but this too is dependent on positions available. It is commonplace for rank to be reduced when a mercenary changes unit although occasionally an opportunity arises to gain a post above the Traveller's current rank.

A unit that has suffered heavy casualties or mass desertion may need to fill senior posts with anyone it can get. Upon occasion a government will be greatly expanding its forces and needs to appoint anyone with experience. This rarely goes all that well; each level of rank carries with it responsibilities that must be trained for. Someone trying to figure it all out will inevitably make mistakes. Thus when a government offers a Traveller with the rank of captain a post as commander of an entire battalion, red flags are generated. Why can a suitable officer not be found? The usual answer is that everyone is being over-promoted.

In this situation it may be that the lieutenant-colonel who would normally be given command of this battalion is serving as a brigadier in charge of several battalions – a post they are not trained for. Meanwhile the Traveller has jumped from second-in-command of a company to commanding officer of a battalion and has a whole new set of skills to learn. Subordinates are similarly out of their depth – the most senior of the company commanders is a former second-lieutenant with a little experience of leading a platoon and the senior non-commissioned officer is a corporal trying to do the job of a sergeant-major. The mercenaries will just have to make it work and at least they are being paid at a level commensurate with their new posts.

When a Traveller joins a new unit, they must determine what rank they are offered. Their application is based upon the highest rank they have successfully held. Usually this means the highest rank ever awarded but in the case where a Traveller has been obviously overpromoted this may be disregarded. A Traveller who left the army with the rank of lieutenant will have a difficult time persuading a new employer they can be effective in the role of a colonel and the fact that the People's Liberation Force of Galactic Unity awarded that rank to all its officers after the only battle it ever won will do little to support the assertion.

As a rule, former officers will be given commissioned rank and enlisted personnel will remain such. The world's best sergeant-major may not have received the training required to function as an officer. Junior officers might agree to serve as sergeants until a suitable vacancy emerges but the opposite is rarely true. However, it is sometimes possible that officer status will be offered and if the Traveller performs satisfactorily they may be able to retain it in future contracts with other units.

During their career as a mercenary, a Traveller must keep track of what is known as their 'personal rank', the highest rank they have successfully held. Typically, successfully completing a mercenary ticket at a given rank is sufficient to consider it successfully held. A Traveller who leaves a military service can consider their final rank as their personal rank until they increase it in mercenary service – with one exception. If a Traveller left their career due to a mishap that can be construed as a dishonourable discharge they must consider their personal rank to be one level lower than their final service rank.

To determine the rank offered to a Traveller upon joining a unit, use the Offered Rank table. Ranks are a guideline; some units have different names for their leaders or assign different responsibilities to certain ranks.

When a Traveller determines the rank they are offered, they must make a check on the indicated skill. The difficulty of this check depends on the level of rank the Traveller is attempting to obtain, modified by the Traveller's personal rank.

Offered Rank

Traveller's Personal Rank	DM
Two Levels Higher	+2
One Level Higher	0
Same Level	–2
One Level Lower	–4
Two Levels Lower	–8
Qualified officer attempting to obtain enlisted rank	+4
Enlisted (sergeant and above) seeking officer rank	–4
Enlisted (corporal or below) seeking officer rank	–8

Mercenary units are generally reluctant to bring a new member in at whatever level their resume claims they have previously served at, even if a vacancy exists, not least because over-inflated resumes cost lives. Thus it is common for Travellers joining a new unit to come in at a lower rank than they have held elsewhere and to be promoted when they have proved themselves.

If the check to obtain a given rank is failed the Traveller can try for the next rank down but applies a DM equal to the negative Effect of the failed check. If the Traveller fails to obtain rank three times they will be offered the lowest rank available, which will be private for enlisted personnel and officer cadet for officers.

Enlisted personnel can try for rank either as an infantry soldier or a specialist. Most mercenaries are infantry, so there tend to be more slots available in this field than all others combined. 'Specialist' in this context means any non-infantry role – vehicle or artillery crews, electronic warfare technicals, combat engineers and the like. It is only possible to attempt to obtain a given level or rank in one or the other – infantry or specialist – but a mercenary who fails at one level can choose infantry or specialist at the next level down.

Travellers seeking commissioned (officer) rank can select command or staff. Command officers lead fighting forces and the unit as a whole; staff have a supporting role. Staff positions include assistants to high-ranking commanders, liaison and diplomatic officers, supply and logistics officers and the like. Staff officers sometimes find themselves thrust into a command role for lack of anyone else but they rarely perform as well as 'fighting' officers and are sometimes looked down upon by combat troops. It is possible for a staff officer to reach the very top echelons of a mercenary unit without going near a fight but such an officer would have difficulty winning the respect of combat troops.

Some units, especially those on long-term contract to affluent governments, may offer a promotion as an incentive to those joining, typically offsetting this by not paying as much as other forces. In such cases a Traveller must apply for a rank as normal but will then be promoted to the next one above after a short probationary period. Whether other mercenary units will be willing to recognise this inflated rank as a Traveller's personal rank is up to the Referee. It may even be detrimental to their chances of getting a suitable post – the most 'fighty' units have very little regard for those who treat command positions as a sort of corporate ladder, taking jobs that bring with them spurious promotions for the sake of career advancement. Officers of that sort get people killed.

Rank and Responsibility

Enlisted Rank	Infantry Responsibility	Infantry Check	Specialist Responsibility	Specialist Check
Private	Me and my rifle	Automatic Acceptance	One job, such as driving a vehicle or loading an artillery piece	Automatic Acceptance
Lance Corporal	Leadership within a squad	Average (8+) Gun Combat	Leadership within a squad	Average (8+) relevant skill, Drive or Heavy Weapons
Corporal	Leader of a small squad, typically 3–6 personnel	Routine (6+) Leadership	Commander of a minor vehicle, system or team	Routine (6+) Leadership
Lance-Sergeant	Leader of a section or large squad, typically 6–12 personnel	Average (8+) Leadership	Commander of a major vehicle or an artillery weapon, electronic warfare system or similar	Average (8+) Leadership
Sergeant	Senior non-commissioned officer in a platoon	Difficult (10+) Leadership	Senior NCO in a platoon of around 4 vehicles or weapon systems	Difficult (10+) Leadership
Gunnery Sergeant	Senior non-commissioned officer in a company	Very Difficult (12+) Leadership	Senior NCO in an artillery, armoured or support company	Very Difficult (12+) Leadership
Sergeant-Major	Senior non-commissioned officer in a battalion	Formidable (14+) Leadership	Senior non-commissioned officer in an artillery, armoured or support battalion	Formidable (14+) Leadership
Commissioned Rank	Command Responsibility	Command Check	Staff Responsibility	Staff Check
Officer Cadet	As assigned on an ad-hoc basis	Average (8+) Leadership	As assigned on an ad-hoc basis	Average (8+) Admin
Second Lieutenant	Commanding officer of a platoon-sized unit (20–40 effectives)	Difficult (10+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a captain or major, or command of a small specialist group such as a group of transport assets	Difficult (10+) Admin
Lieutenant	Commanding officer of a platoon-sized unit or executive officer of a company-sized unit	Average (8+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a major or more senior officer, or command of a specialist part of the unit such as logistics	Very Difficult (12+) Admin

Enlisted Rank	Infantry Responsibility	Infantry Check	Specialist Responsibility	Specialist Check
Captain	Executive officer or possibly commanding officer of a company-sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a senior officer or commander of a specialist segment of a battalion sized force, such as intelligence officer	Difficult (10+) relevant skill (Diplomat for liaison, Admin for logistics and so on) and Routine (6+) Leadership
Major	Commanding officer of a company-sized unit or executive officer of a battalion sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a senior officer or commander of a specialist segment of a battalion sized or larger force, such as intelligence officer	Difficult (10+) relevant skill (Diplomat for liaison, Admin for logistics and so on) and Routine (6+) Leadership
Lieutenant-Colonel	Commanding Officer of a battalion sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	Liaison or assistant to a very senior officer or commander of a specialist segment of force greater than battalion sized	Difficult (10+) relevant skill (Diplomat for liaison, Admin for logistics and so on) and Average (8+) Leadership
Colonel	Commanding Officer of a reinforced battalion sized unit	Difficult (10+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	N/A	N/A
Brigadier	Commanding Officer of a brigade sized unit	Very Difficult (12+) Tactics and Average (8+) Leadership	N/A	N/A
Major-General	Commanding Officer of a division sized formation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lieutenant General	Commanding officer of a corps sized formation	N/A	N/A	N/A
General	Commanding officer of an army	N/A	N/A	N/A

Ranks above Lieutenant-colonel are extremely rare in the mercenary world. Holders of such rank are minor legends and would be automatically appointed to a vacancy if they were available at the right time. It is highly unlikely a Traveller will be in a position to apply for a job as commander of a brigade or higher level formation – although they may manage to raise their own.

Example

Pavel has left the army with the rank of captain and decides to seek a career as a mercenary. He was honourably discharged and thus has a personal rank of captain. Hearing that a large mercenary force is hiring, he applies and easily passes the first round of recruitment. This is designed to weed out undesirables and those making spurious claims on their resume. Provisionally accepted by the unit, Pavel rather optimistically tries for a position as a company commander with the rank of major. He must make a Difficult Tactics check and an Average Leadership check, both with DM-4 because Pavel's personal rank is one level lower than the one he is trying for.

With the skills gained during his service, Pavel has an outside chance at this but fails with a combined Effect from the two skill checks of –3. He tries for a more modest post as a platoon commander, bringing with it the rank of lieutenant in this unit. Pavel now needs to make Average Leadership and Tactics checks, with DM-3 from the carried-over Effect of his previous failure. His personal rank is one level higher than he is applying for, which is more or less the industry standard, so Pavel has no DM for rank.

With his skill bonuses, Pavel has DM+2 on the Leadership check; with the DM-3 this is a net DM-1. He rolls 7 on 2D, for Effect –2. Not good. Pavel's Tactics DM is +3, cancelling out the carried-over DM-3. Pavel aces the Tactics test, rolling 11. This gives him Effect +3, which is sufficient to cancel out the DM-2 from the failed Leadership test. Although the unit's commanders have some reservations about his leadership ability, Pavel is clearly an excellent tactician and is offered the platoon commander's slot.

Pavel begins his service with the unit holding the rank of lieutenant but his personal rank remains captain. If he applies to another unit he would use that rank, not his current one that is specific to this force. Over time, Pavel proves himself and is promoted to captain in the unit and then major. When the time comes to move on he will use his personal rank of major to seek a suitable position in whatever unit he transfers to.

Promotion and Training

Once a Traveller has entered service with a mercenary unit they may be promoted in due course. However, promotion is not a small matter – especially for officers. In regular services it is usually preceded by several courses to provide the training required to function at the new level. Commanding a company is a more complex matter than leading a platoon, and commanding a battalion is still more difficult. Often wholly new skills have to be developed and the officer must learn to think in a different way. Someone uncomfortable in their new role, or who does not properly understand it, may be prone to acting as a lower-level officer. The army commander might do a marvellous job of siting that gun battery but meanwhile there are units waiting directionless.

In a mercenary unit, especially a small one, officer ranks are more about leadership and business decisions than directing an army. It is usually possible to learn the skills needed to run a company-sized unit on the job, perhaps with the aid of some distance-learning packages. Up to this point the leaders of a mercenary unit are just that – fighting leaders who also make some business decisions. As a force gets bigger or starts to incorporate multiple troop types formal training becomes ever more necessary. Promoting someone purely for fighting ability then hoping they will somehow figure out how to run the logistics and procurement for a battalion-sized force is a risky gambit at best.

Promotion is generally accompanied by a period of training or secondment to a force that can provide it. One way to do this is to arrange personnel exchanges with larger mercenary units or planetary armed forces. Sometimes this is done on a courtesy or mutual-benefit basis, with the seconded mercenaries sharing their experiences with local forces whilst receiving training from them. On other occasions it is a simple fee-for-service arrangement, although some mercenary units will carry out missions for a client in return for providing or arranging advanced training.

If the Travellers are running their own mercenary unit, they can make their own decisions about promotion and training. If they want to award themselves ridiculous titles there is really nothing to stop them, although this will affect the way their unit is perceived. Likewise, if they over-promote personnel without training they will inevitably run into problems. There is another factor that Referees should keep in mind. It is common in entertainment for characters to be promoted for achieving trivial successes and also at the end of every book, season or movie. The end result is a force where everyone is a general, admiral or space princess but nobody knows how to actually run a military force. The Travellers' expectations must be managed – they may become disaffected if they do not receive a promotion every mission, even if this is a ludicrous situation.

For small units – up to company size or so – the situation is usually quite simple. If there is a need for someone of a given rank then someone must be found. That may mean recruiting additional personnel or promoting someone and hoping they grow into the new role. This is another limiting factor that keeps the majority of mercenary units at company size or smaller. Any former officer is likely to have a skillset suitable for setting up and running a small mercenary unit but larger forces need multiple officers with a much more advanced set of skills and those that try to survive without them inevitably run into trouble.

CREATING PERSONNEL

It is possible to create every single member of a mercenary unit using the Traveller Creation rules in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for a suitable career. Not everyone will come from the army or marines; former naval personnel are a good source of technical skills and merchants or those with a corporate background may be useful on the business side of the mercenary trade. Some units will take people with no relevant skills and train them from scratch – others will take them and throw them into combat for lack of anyone better.

The Mercenary Creation table can be used to quickly generate mercenary personnel to fill out a roster. Skills are selected from four tables: Mercenary, Infantry, Specialist and Command. Note that this method is not recommended for Travellers, who should instead use the *Traveller Core Rulebook* for a suitable prior career as normal.

Mercenary skills relate to the mercenary life in general and may or may not be directly connected with the mercenary's current employment. For example, someone who has knocked about the sort of places where mercenaries are hired might pick up levels of Melee Combat or Streetwise without ever being part of a specialist backstreet brawling unit.
Infantry skills are the bread and butter of mercenary units, including most security and specialist forces. Infantry skills deal with direct combat. For example, a career solider will probably have been trained on most common small arms and support weapons, and thus gained Gun Combat and Heavy Weapons skills.
Specialist skills are mainly used by supporting troops, ranging from artillery and vehicle crews to combat engineering and medical personnel. For example a mercenary might be the squad's designated 'combat lifesaver' and have the Medic skill or have spent many hours delivering rations and gaining the Drive skill.
Command skills are necessary for junior and senior leadership positions. More senior personnel often need business and legal skills more than those relating to combat. For example a sergeant will likely have picked up levels in Leadership whereas a senior officer may have had to study law and business practice, thus gaining Advocate and Broker.

Mercenary Creation

Rank	Terms Completed	Automatic Skills	Skills
Colonel	7	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 2, Admin 2	1 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 4 Command, 4 Mercenary
Lieutenant-Colonel	6	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 2, Admin 2	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 3 Command, 3 Mercenary
Major	5	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 1, Admin 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 3 Command, 3 Mercenary
Captain	4	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 2 Command, 2 Mercenary
Lieutenant	3	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 1, Tactics 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Command, 1 Mercenary
Second Lieutenant	2	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 0, Tactics 0	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Command, 1 Mercenary
Officer Cadet	1	Gun Combat 0, Leadership 0, Tactics 0	1 Specialist, 1 Command
Sergeant-Major	7	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 3, Tactics 1	4 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 3 Mercenary, 3 Command
Gunnery Sergeant	6	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 2, Tactics 1	3 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 2 Mercenary, 2 Command
Sergeant	5	Athletics 0, Gun Combat, Leadership 2, Tactics 1	3 Infantry, 2 Specialist, 2 Mercenary, 1 Command
Lance-Sergeant	4	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 1, Tactics 1	3 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 2 Mercenary
Corporal	3	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1, Leadership 1	2 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Mercenary
Lance-Corporal	2	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1	1 Infantry, 1 Specialist, 1 Mercenary
Private	1	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 1	1 Infantry or 1 Specialist
Recruit	0	Athletics 0, Gun Combat 0	Any one Infantry or Specialist skill at level 0

Personnel are still in the service so do not receive mustering out benefits. They are assumed to be D3 years into their current term, so personnel who need to have served three terms to hold their current rank will be 30+D3 years old and be somewhere in their fourth term of service.

Skills

Infantry Skills	Specialist Skills	Command Skills	Mercenary Skills
+1 to STR, DEX or END	Mechanic	Admin	Gun Combat
Athletics	Electronics	Advocate	Melee Combat
Gun Combat	Medic	Diplomat	Streetwise
Heavy Weapons	Heavy Weapons	Persuade	Gambler
Melee Combat	Drive	Leadership	Recon
Medic	Flyer	Broker	Stealth
Recon	Seafarer	Investigate	Medic
Stealth	Explosives	Tactics	Drive
	Vacc Suit		Athletics
			Survival

CHAPTER-FOUR

RUNNING A MERCENARY CAMPAIGN

A mercenary campaign might be run in a sandbox style, with the Travellers taking on whatever tickets they feel like or it may be tightly scripted with a particular story to tell. Most campaigns fall somewhere in between these extremes. It is easiest for the Referee to keep control over where the campaign goes if the Travellers are members of a mercenary unit controlled by someone else but there is great satisfaction to be had from making their own decisions and dealing with the problems they throw up.

It is also possible to use these rules to run a military or political-military campaign that is not quite the same as the mercenary campaign. The Travellers might be leaders among an insurgent movement gathering forces to overthrow an oppressive government or might be the leaders of a vicious street gang striving to take over the startown of a backwater world. The common denominator is that there is going to be violence and lots of it.

The Referee must balance rewards against what is often termed 'bloat'. A mercenary unit that is making a modest profit will stay hungry and will take on risky jobs to obtain or be able to afford desirable equipment. One that is handed truckloads of money for every fight will soon be swanning around in gold-plated TL15 grav tanks and declining to get out of bed for under 100 million Credits. It can be difficult to find interesting things for such a unit to do and to provide a suitable challenge.

CAMPAIGN THEMES

Most campaigns have a general theme, which dictates both the feel of the game and the overall direction of the storyline. If the Travellers own their own mercenary force or aspire to, building it up and overcoming setbacks can be the theme of the campaign. However, it is still possible to have an overall campaign style and theme.

The Episodic Campaign

A campaign can take the form of a series of tickets, with events in between glossed over. In a campaign of this type the mercenary unit may find itself launching a strike against insurgent strongholds on a desert world one session and defending a city against alien invasion the next. Administrative and maintenance tasks are assumed to take place between the tickets but need not be played out. Likewise any given ticket may not be connected to an overall storyline – and there may not be an overall storyline other than the growth and development of the mercenary force.

The Great War

The mercenary campaign might be connected to a major conflict, such as the Fifth Frontier War of the Third Imperium or an ongoing battle for freedom against a tyrannical galactic empire. At least some tickets will be connected to an overall storyline for the conflict. It is possible that the course of the war may be decided by the outcome of the mercenary force's operations or the level of opposition they face might be determined by how well or badly the conflict is going.

The 'great war' in this context might be a local or planetary conflict or a huge clash between interstellar powers. Either way, the mercenaries will find themselves at the sharp end of the conflict and may end up generating their own missions. Indeed, rather than being offered a job for a fee they might be recruited as part of the forces of one side or the other, collecting the same salaries as regular soldiers. The mercenaries might become friends or rivals with other units fighting on the same side or may develop a special enmity for a particular unit or personality on the other side.

For example, mercenaries are hired by a group of small towns desperate to eradicate bandits from their region. After a few simple striker missions the Travellers realise the situation is spiralling out of control and civil war has broken out. With bands of raiders laying waste to the region the planetary government offers to take over the mercenaries' contract and asks them to raise and train a militia to defend the region. Soon the mercenaries are trying to coordinate a campaign of defence among dozens of towns, with only raw local volunteers to work with. The campaign then takes a sharp left turn when the government is toppled and the mercenaries find the defence force they trained turning into an insurgent movement loyal to their old employers. The new government offers to buy out their contract and ship them offworld but the Travellers have good friends among the insurgents. Those willing but clueless farmers they trained are now a fledgeling army willing to take on the corrupt new government. Perhaps the Travellers can help bring the war to a successful conclusion… or perhaps they are leading their allies to destruction.

Political or Personal Goals

Mercenary work is a wonderful way to put together a battle-hardened combat force. Perhaps the Travellers or their patrons have an ultimate goal and need just such an army. The campaign will evolve as usual, with the Travellers taking on jobs to get money… but also to make contacts and obtain information. When the time is right the mercenary force will leave the fight-for-hire marketplace and strike for its ultimate goal.

For example, the Travellers are former soldiers who mutinied rather than serve a corrupt and tyrannical new government. Unable to do anything at the time they fled but have begun building a strike force to eliminate their enemies. The work their force takes on is unpalatable at times but that is where the big money is. Mercenary work is a means to an end and the memories of fallen comrades or murdered loved ones keep the Travellers working towards their goal.

When they have gathered their strength the Travellers will move to the final phase of their plan. A strike on government centres, leadership of a popular uprising and they will be able to take vengeance at last. Their aim may be to restore the rightful government or to create one of their own. At that time they will need declarations of support from governments that owe them a favour, shipments of arms brought in by friendly merchants and the reliable fighting power of their carefully honed mercenary force.

TRAVELLERS AND THEIR ROLES

The standard format for a mercenary campaign places the Travellers as owners and leaders of the mercenary unit, perhaps with some of the Travellers acting as commanders of sub-units or specialist officers. However, there are other options.

The Random Approach

It would be possible to create Travellers using the normal creation system in the *Traveller Core Rulebook* and assign them roles according to rank and suitability. This can work well for a scratch force or a one-off game but may not suit some or all of the Travellers if they are thrust into roles they are not comfortable with. This can cut both ways – some Travellers are utterly unsuited to a command role, uncomfortable in it, or both.

The Non-Player Commander

It is not necessary to assign all of the unit's senior positions to the Travellers. The Referee may prefer to retain the role of the unit owner and/or commander, allowing a measure of control over the unit's actions. This is useful with Traveller groups who have a tendency be wayward or who have not yet grasped the concept of the mercenary campaign. Once they have been shown the ropes by this experienced commander they may be able to move into command roles or set up their own unit.

Having a non-player commander takes away a part of the decision-making from the Travellers, which can be a good thing and is actually preferable for some groups. It allows the Referee to control the Travellers when necessary, since the commander's word is essentially law. A non-player commander might be incompetent of course, or may have a sinister agenda.

Seconded to Local Forces

If the Travellers' contract requires them to function as part of the local forces they may be assigned an officer as liaison or as their commander for the duration of the ticket. They may even be serving as an elite force guarding the local high command – or acting as troubleshooters for them. It is important to keep in mind that local officers are representatives of the client rather than members of the unit and that there may be a disconnect between orders as given and the terms of the contract.

Less Senior Travellers

Some or all of the Travellers may wish to play less senior positions – not everyone likes making big decisions! A campaign where the Travellers are low-ranking soldiers could be very interesting. They will be given general orders, with some discretion about how to carry them out, and may have little idea what is happening in terms of the 'big picture'. Alternatively, some Travellers may wish to take roles where they can participate in adventures but do not have big decisions to make whilst others are the leaders of the unit. The commander's bodyguard might be an interesting role to play, or the cyber-warfare expert. Nobody should be forced to take a role they feel is ineffectual or one they do not want, so junior Travellers must still have an area where they can excel.

As a variant on this theme, it may be desirable to have two sets of Travellers – 'leaders' and 'doers'. If so, the most senior member of the leaders group should be the most junior in the doers and so forth – unless the Traveller does not want to be in charge. Typically the doers will be the unit's odd-job-squad, assigned to carry out scrounging for supplies, intelligence-gathering raids and most other hands-on tasks away from the main body of the unit. The doers will typically be enlisted personnel led by a very junior officer or two.

For those Travellers who do not want to be part of the chain of command, there are additional options. A unit might have civilian experts as its diplomats, hackers and administrators. These Travellers are limited in that they cannot give orders but have additional options not available to most personnel.

DEVELOPING THE CAMPAIGN

A mercenary campaign must be approached with some care. Mercenaries need conflicts to fight in, and a major conflict can change the setting or become implausible if it drags on without affecting events elsewhere. It can also become samey after a while. One answer is to have the mercenaries move from one ticket to another, fighting in different places against a variety of opposition, and to present a range of adventures rather than straight combat all the time.

A lesson to be learned from military science-fiction is that endless fight scenes will quickly become dull and what makes the story interesting is the why, where, what and who that goes along with it. Interesting characters – within the mercenary unit and outside it – are just as vital in a mercenary campaign as in other adventures. Bizarre opponents or clients from strange cultures can make an interesting change, as can the locations the mercenaries visit.

Mercenaries do not just fight. They also carouse in the local bars, meet people, go shopping and get involved in scams or side adventures that have nothing to do with their employment as soldiers. A mercenary campaign can include a great many other types of adventure and indeed might be a vehicle for them. It may be that the tickets-and-fighting part of the campaign is a backdrop to stories about the mercenaries themselves. Those stories could be almost anything.

Mercenaries providing security for a scientific expedition might find themselves at the centre of a classic 'horror in space' type adventure. It is common in such tales for the guards to be essentially scenery or used to show how the monster works… but what if just for once they are the heroes of the tale? Instead of 'the guards' guns didn't help, now the scientists or the free trader crew have to figure out a solution' the adventure might turn this trope on its head: 'their science didn't help. Fortunately we have lots of guns' or even 'our guns didn't help and the scientists are all dead. Now we need to figure out a solution!'. Instead of the plucky scientist or pilot inventing an improvised super-weapon we might see the mercenaries improvising some science.

Other classic adventure concepts can be turned around this way, moving the focus from the usual central characters to their guards. Alternatively, adventures might happen to the mercenaries on their vacation. Terrorists might take over a high-class resort, not realising that an entire company of mercenaries is there celebrating the completion of a lucrative contract. Perhaps friends or relatives of the mercenaries are in trouble and need assistance, or the mercenaries stumble over a clue to an ancient treasure whilst conducting training on a remote moon.

Adventures can also be part of a ticket. The mercenaries may have to navigate local politics or find a way to get weaponry they need. Sometimes such adventures generate themselves. If the mercenaries are facing the prospect of taking heavy casualties attacking an enemy fortress they might come up with an alternative. This might mean an undercover infiltration or a delegation sent to – legally or otherwise – obtain a weapon that will break the enemy's defences wide open.

The tone of a mercenary campaign is likely to be serious, with moments of tragedy. Lighter moments are necessary to provide a counterpoint but it is important not to allow the campaign to descend into flippancy or silliness. Black humour is quite acceptable; slapstick is not. There will be moments of pure comedy, of course, but these should be something experienced by the mercenaries rather than engineered for the sake of amusement.

There are many variations on the mercenary campaign, some of them highly unusual. A mercenary unit might be made up of many different species or have personnel from unusual backgrounds. Most mercenary units are formally organised along standard lines but it is possible that a unit might be made up of intellectuals, political radicals and a few religious zealots – and have a democratic leadership system. This is not to say that such a unit would be effective but it is possible. Alternatively, the unit might be highly specialised. A cyber-warfare unit will probably not go anywhere near a war zone if its personnel can help it, whilst a psionics-for-hire unit might find itself in some very strange environments. A unit might even have a stipulation that all personnel must be an expert in some academic or practical field, cornering the market for jobs beyond the capability of 'mere' combat soldiers.

However oddball the unit may be, its members will still need to give and obey orders. Failure to obey orders is more than an annoyance or minor act of rebellion. Someone who does not do what they are told can derail a plan and put others at risk or may affect the unit's bottom line if they cause a contract to be failed. Mercenary units are not tolerant of those that jeopardise their colleagues and the unit as a whole. Thus it is necessary to consider how much leeway the Travellers will have in following orders... or not.

One way around this problem is to assign a role with a great deal of independence to those Travellers who do not like a formal chain of command. They will be able to act autonomously most of the time, although they will still have to conform to a plan and give respect to their superiors when in contact with them. Even in this situation one factor that Travellers need to accept is that there is a command structure in place and those who oppose their superiors' decisions or simply ignore them may land themselves in trouble. Travellers must accept the boundaries of the campaign environment and agree to either remain within them or live with the consequences if they do not.

The Referee should give thought to other factors before beginning the campaign. The existence of a hierarchy and chain of command can be a problem if high-ranking positions are given to Travellers who are not good strategists or whose attention tends to wander during a game. In a typical adventure the Traveller who has zoned out or insists on waffling on about a book they once read can be bypassed but if they are a critical link in the chain of command their inattention will bring proceedings to a halt. Likewise someone who abuses their position of command to give frivolous orders – or cannot think strategically and gives instructions guaranteed to lead to disaster – can wreck a mercenary campaign. The Referee must balance fairness in letting all the Travellers have a shot at the most important roles with the need to have someone effective in them.

One important question is that of rank and 'screen time'. Low-ranking Travellers should not be relegated to simply rolling dice to carry out whatever their superiors have ordered. The answer is to place Travellers in important roles, which are not necessarily the highest-ranking. For example, the platoon marksman has to obey the orders of the platoon lieutenant but will often have to make decisions independently. The 'point man' at the head of a patrol might end up dictating the course of an engagement by what they did in the first few seconds and it is possible that an ordinary soldier might be the real leader of a unit.

The Referee must also be aware that the Travellers might diverge from the campaign style. Those who have come to understand how mercenaries operate should be able to remain within the bounds of the campaign but some Travellers cannot resist the temptation to revert to a 'what's in it for me?' approach or will react to an overbearing or irritating client by tearing up the contract and turning on them. The consequences of such an action for a mercenary unit would be devastating and might result in a choice between allowing the Travellers to get away with it or ending the campaign.

One solution is to include frequent reminders that there are consequences for unprofessional behaviour. If the mercenaries operate through a regulating authority they will be penalised and might face criminal or civil legal action. A unit might end up losing some of its heavy equipment to pay a fine imposed by a civilian court over irregular behaviour. Trying to shoot their way out of that situation will make the mercenaries interstellar criminals, possibly hunted by bigger and better mercenary outfits chasing a bounty.

The Referee can also provide guidance and some measure of deterrence by way of members of the unit. Even if the Travellers want to abandon their contract and stage a coup, they may face mutiny from more professional members of the force or their plans might be leaked to the local authorities. Ultimately the Travellers will make their choices and answer for them. So long as the Referee has been fair and given them plenty of warning about the consequences of just doing as they please the Travellers have no right to complain if they face problems caused by their own actions.

RAISING AND RUNNING A MERCENARY FORCE

The mechanics of raising and operating a mercenary force are detailed in *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Force*. These mechanics are used 'behind the scenes' and need to be referenced rarely, if ever, when the mercenaries are actively engaged in their missions. When the mercenaries want to recruit personnel or procure equipment they can refer to *Book 2* for the appropriate processes.

Supplies and Logistics

Whilst most aspects of running a mercenary force are taken care of between tickets, the level of supplies available to a unit is important throughout. A logistics snarl-up can leave an otherwise effective force unable to fight for lack of ammunition and units can be forced to retreat from a good position for lack of food and water. Logistics can also lead to Missions and Adventures as the mercenaries try to obtain the supplies they need or get them from a depot to a forward operating base.

All of the supplies a unit uses – spare boots, ammunition, ration packs and so forth – are abstracted as Supply Units or SU. An SU for a ground unit is different from one intended for use by a naval ship and is only partially interchangeable. A naval crew plundering ground forces' supplies will obtain just 2D% of the number of SU seized. This is because whilst food and small-arms ammunition may be the same most of the tools and spares needed for a starship are not found in ground-forces depots. A ground unit stealing from (or trading with) the navy has the same problem but can obtain 3D% of the SU taken as more of it will be usable in some form.

The amount of SU consumed by a force depends on its size, complexity of equipment and what the force is doing. There are also efficiencies of scale regarding larger formations. The Supply Units table gives the SU cost of one day of operations. For simplicity, modest variations in force size are disregarded – a 120-soldier company can be assumed to use the same amount of supplies as a 180-strong company. A unit in barracks, conducting only light and routine training, requires half its routine operations allocation of supplies. Preparations for deployment or significant training count as routine operations.

Supply Units

Force Size	SU Per Day (Routine Operations)	SU Per Day (Combat Operations)
Squad	1	5
Section	2	10
Platoon	10	50
Company	35	175
Battalion	125	625
Infantry or specialist troops with vehicles	x2	x3
Armoured (battle dress equipped) Infantry	x2.5	x10
Light tanks and armoured fighting vehicles	x3	x5
Battle tanks and similar heavy vehicles	x5	x8
Artillery or heavy anti-aerospace weapons	x2.5	x4

Supply requirements are most easily calculated from the primary troop type of the main force. This is entirely acceptable if the vast majority of the unit is of a standard troop type, with just a few pieces of additional equipment. If the force contains a broad mix of unit types, SU requirements must be calculated on the basis of major sub-units or even lower-level units.

Example

Teegin's Legion is set up as an all-arms battalion-sized battlegroup. It is organised along conventional lines with four companies, each with four platoons and a small headquarters detachment. The battalion HQ is a platoon-sized unit including communications, administrative and security elements along with a light aerospace defence capability afforded by a pair of grav sleds armed with missile launchers and a laser cannon. The HQ also contains a few light vehicles and some grav trucks for logistics and general transport work.

Since the battalion contains a variety of troop types its supply requirements cannot be rated on a whole-unit basis. Instead the HQ and each company is rated separately and the total is used. The headquarters is considered to be a platoon of 'infantry with vehicles' since this is the nearest match. It requires 10 SU per day, multiplied by 2, or 20 SU per day on routine operations. If the unit is engaged in combat – even if the HQ is not – this will increase to 150 SU.

First Company is equipped as grav cavalry. Its four platoons each contain a light grav tank plus three grav APCs, each with a section of infantry aboard. This is considered to be 'light tanks and armoured fighting vehicles' for the purposes of supply requirement. First Company requires 105 SU per day, increasing to 525 SU per day in a combat environment.

Second and Third Companies are equipped as lift infantry, and are considered to be 'infantry with vehicles'. Each requires 70 SU per day under normal conditions and 525 SU per day in combat.

Fourth Company is the support element for the other three. It contains a small mobile workshop which is usually detached and left with the headquarters when Fourth Company enters combat. The workshop is considered to be a platoon-equivalent. The company also has an aerospace defence platoon of three grav sleds, an artillery platoon with five grav-mobile artillery pieces and a general-support platoon with a nuclear damper vehicle, another aerospace defence sled and a security element of lift infantry in a single grav APC. This platoon also has three air/rafts used for scouting. The whole collection is considered to be a company of 'artillery or heavy aerospace defence weapons'. It requires 88 SU per day, or 700 SU under combat conditions.

The battalion as a whole requires 353 SU per day under normal conditions, and burns through 2005 SU per day in combat. Keeping the force supplied is a major headache for the command staff, or possibly a source of adventure ideas for the referee

Capacity and Transportation

Any force can carry three times its routine supply requirement with it, which means that most units are capable of only one day of combat operations using their ready ammunition and supplies. An advance meeting little or no opposition, even in a war zone, would not be considered combat operations, as would low-intensity skirmishing. However, any serious fight will rapidly exhaust the supplies carried by a combat unit.

The problem can be resolved by establishing a suitable logistics chain and supply dumps at appropriate points. Static and mobile logistics assets must then be defended, which requires more troops – who use up more supplies! A logistician's work is never done and it is wisely said that amateurs study tactics whilst professionals give themselves stress-related personality disorders over the supply chain. This is important to a mercenary campaign as it can drive the Travellers to make risky decisions or accept less than perfect outcomes from their operations.

A pre-prepared supply dump can contain any amount of SU, although the contents must be secured, stored and organised in a logical fashion that make it possible to find what is needed in the correct quantities. If stored or transported in bulk, 100 SU consumes one displacement ton aboard a starship or two Spaces aboard a vehicle. Once broken out ready for quick use or made up into packages this increases to five Spaces for 100 SU or 20 SU per Space.

Some mercenary units rely on their employer for support, which can be problematical. The solution is to have a logistics component within the unit, which takes personnel away from the 'sharp end'. As a result, small mercenary units in particular are very lean in the logistics department. A standard six-seater air/raft can carry 20 SU in ready-to-use packages without conversion. By reducing the occupants to a pilot and a security trooper this can be increased to 100 SU. That is sufficient to support an infantry company for just over three days or to provide one day's support with two more stockpiled. This is a common solution to the logistics problem for company-sized formations, whereas larger forces typically require a dedicated support element either of their own or hired along with them.

Specialist logistics units are surprisingly common in the mercenary marketplace, since many local forces lack the capability to efficiently support a force in the field. Other units include logistics in a multi-faceted support provision, including electronic warfare, intelligence gathering and other specialist aspects of warfighting. Whilst not a substitute for advanced weapons and the training to use them, support formations of this sort enable lower-tech forces to function on the modern battlefield and ensure they have enough supplies to remain there.

If supplies are purchased from a specialist purveyor they have a nominal cost of Cr100 per SU, with bulk discounts bringing this down to Cr8000 for 100 SU and Cr650000 for 10,000 SU. A unit's leaders may be able to negotiate a better price or have the client pay for supplies as part of their contract. Costs increase greatly if different components must be sourced separately. In theory it is cheaper to buy ammunition in bulk in one place and uniforms somewhere else but this only works if the mercenaries are buying large quantities. Supplies must then be packaged for transportation and in such a way they last until needed. A brigade-sized or larger unit could save money by operating in this manner but for most units the additional costs of processing the supplies outweigh the benefit of buying them more cheaply.

Shortages and Reduced Rations

A unit that is short of supplies may deliberately reduce its usage or may have to if it is in danger of running out. A unit that is completely out of supplies can fight but at an enormously reduced level of capability. Troops will be issued a handful of rounds per day and ordered to shoot only in self-defence, avoiding contact or breaking off when enemies are encountered. It is possible for an inventive group of Travellers to find ways to harass the enemy with booby traps or even thrown rocks, or to obtain food and ammunition from the enemy, but the odds are against a force that runs out of supplies.

In the longer term, the amount of supplies a unit consumes can be reduced by efficient and diligent troops. Each week on deployment the unit's commander or logistics officer must make an Average (8+) Admin check. The unit's routine use of spares and supplies is reduced by 2.5% for every point of Effect. There are no penalties associated with this kind of reduction; it is the routine frugality of well-disciplined troops who know they may run short of something during a long deployment. This applies only to routine operations; combat still burns through supplies at the usual rate.

The supply budget can also be deliberately cut by putting the troops on short rations and refusing to issue replacements for damaged or lost equipment unless absolutely necessary. Again, this applies only to routine operations. This measure is sometimes used as supplies begin to run short but can also be employed to reduce the logistics burden of a remote outpost or allow a stockpile to be built up in case of a siege. The commanding officer decides how much to cut the supply budget by and makes a Difficult (10+) Leadership check with DM-1 per 5% reduction or part thereof. This cannot be combined with general unit efficiency as it is a deliberate shortening of rations and skimping on maintenance.

Any negative Effect on this Leadership check is applied to an immediate minor MOR check – this check is not made if an Effect of 0 or better is achieved, since unit has accepted the situation and agrees it is necessary. Grumbling and some internal black marketeering are likely but the crew will not suffer reduced MOR if the check is made.

For example, a mercenary infantry company is ordered to hold a remote outpost blocking a mountain pass and to conduct local patrols in the region. It requires 35 SU per day to conduct normal non-combat operations. The unit is highly efficient and its logistics officer makes a successful Admin check with Effect 3. The actual amount of supplies used is reduced by 7.5%, to 32, during the first week of operations.

However, a combination of hostile action and the inefficiency of local troops supporting the mercenaries results in supplies arriving intermittently. The commander is worried about the possibility that her unit's reserves might be used up quickly if the region goes 'hot'. She decides to cut the supply budget by 25%, to 26 SU per day, in order to build up a reserve. This requires a Difficult leadership check with DM-5, which she passes with Effect 0. The troops are not at all happy about the situation and make some interesting suggestions about what to do with whomever is responsible for the local logistics situation but their morale is not seriously affected this week. A new decision will have to be made next week but in the meantime the mercenaries go about their business efficiently… just with a lot more grumbling.

Effects of Supplies on Combat

A unit that starts the day with an adequate level of supplies fights as normal. If the supply level is not adequate there are two options. The unit can deliberately conserve ammunition and supplies, or it can use up what it has and hope it wins before the last rounds are fired.

Conserving ammunition and other supplies can be done one of two ways. Some sub-units can be more or less kept out of the fight and issued only enough supplies to defend themselves if directly attacked. These units are considered to be not available, which may deprive the unit of support bonuses or require that it be considered a smaller force. The Referee will need to come up with a suitable narrative to describe what happens in realistic terms; keeping the artillery battery out of the fight will save a lot of supplies but it is not plausible to assume its ammunition is somehow transformed into advanced combat rifle bullets. Instead, the Referee might state that the artillery has very little ammunition left for its guns and expends it in one barrage that breaks up an enemy attack. This saves the infantry from needing to fire their weapons. This, and the fact that the artillery crews have given up almost all of the ammunition for their personal weapons, has the desired effect without straining the bonds of disbelief.

A sub-unit that is kept out of the fight uses only its non-combat allocation of supplies that day. The same applies if a sub-unit is kept in reserve or not needed. A unit whose tanks are kept concealed for a surprise attack when the enemy does not expect it does not need to pay combat-level supply costs for them. Likewise an aerospace defence battery that has nothing to shoot at does not consume combat supplies. These units can be assumed to be in a state of readiness and can be committed at any time, then paying their full combat supply costs for the day.

Alternatively, the whole unit or any sub-unit can be required to conserve supplies. This means eschewing the usual prodigious expenditure of ammunition on suppressive fire. Instead most soldiers will act as spotters for the marksmen, firing only carefully aimed shots or in self-defence. Movement will be kept to a minimum and support from artillery or other units delivered only if absolutely necessary. For every 10% or part thereof a unit reduces its supply expenditure by, it receives DM-1 on all resolution checks. Expenditure cannot be reduced below 10%.

Field Repairs

Normally, repairs to vehicles and large pieces of hardware such as electronic warfare systems or artillery weapons are conducted at a base. Getting the damaged item there can be a challenge but the repair does not consume supplies. It is instead part of the maintenance and support required to run a mercenary unit. If the repair takes place between tickets it is resolved using the rules in *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Unit.*

When repairs are necessary to a vehicle or system in order to get it back into service quickly they must be undertaken as a field repair. This can be carried out as an Operation using the unit's CEI or the DEI of the maintenance detachment. The following modifiers apply:

Vehicle or system totally destroyed: No repair possible.
Vehicle or system crippled: –6
Vehicle or system disabled –4
Vehicle or system damaged: –2
Vehicle or system mission killed: 0
Basic mobile workshop available: +2
Comprehensive mobile workshop available: +4

'Mission-killed' means that the vehicle or system cannot do its job due to the failure or damage to a critical component rather than severe structural damage. A ground tank with a thrown track is mission-killed, as is a precision artillery system whose targeting sensor antennae are disabled.

An attempt at field repairs costs an amount of SU equal to the requirements of a squad of that type. For example a light grav tank squad (essentially a single vehicle) requires 25 SU per day of combat operations. If the repair fails another attempt can be made the following day. Three failures in a row means the vehicle or system has much more serious problems than were at first suspected and cannot be repaired in the field. Note that personnel cannot be repaired in this manner but warbots or other robotic systems can.

Obtaining Supplies

Normally when a unit is to be sent on a mission it should start out with a full load of supplies and provision for resupply in place. Mercenaries soon find that this is an ideal rather than reality and quite often they are expected to perform wonders on a shoestring budget. To determine the supply situation at the beginning of the active part of a ticket, the unit's commander or logistics officer must make an Average (8+) Admin check, adding the Effect to the result of a 2D roll.

Available Supplies

2D	Outcome
0 or less	The supply situation is disastrous. The unit has sufficient supplies for 2D days of non-combat operations at its forward base and an virtually nothing in reserve.
1–2	The supply situation is dire. The unit has sufficient supplies for 3D days of non-combat operations at its forward base and virtually nothing in reserve in the rear area.
3–4	The supply situation is poor. The unit has sufficient supplies for D3+1 days of combat operations at its forward base and a worryingly low amount in reserve for when resupply becomes necessary.
5–6	The supply situation is a little short. The unit has sufficient supplies for 1D+1 days of combat operations at its forward base. Reserves in the rear area are low but should be acceptable.
7–8	The supply situation is about average. The unit has sufficient supplies for 2D days of combat operations at its forward base and sufficient in reserve.
9–10	The supply situation is better than average. The unit has sufficient supplies for 2D+3days of combat operations at its forward base and plenty in reserve.
11–12	The unit is slightly overstocked in some areas, with some items it does not need that could be traded to other formations. The unit begins its mission with 3D+1 days' worth of combat supplies in its forward base and plenty more available when needed. It gains MOR +1. The excess is not huge, and might represent quality rather than quantity.
13 or more	The unit has far more than it needs, including many items that might be considered luxuries. The forward base contains 4D+2 days' worth of combat supplies, with mountains more just waiting to be brought forward. The unit gains a bonus of +1 to both ECEI and MOR until the supply situation changes.

If a unit has less than six days' worth of combat supplies (which equates to 30 days of non-combat operations) available at the beginning of a mission, MOR is reduced by –1. If less than two days' worth of combat supplies are available MOR is reduced by a total of –2.

Scrounging and Trading

A shortfall in stores can be offset in a variety of creative ways. This could be the subject of an adventure, in which case the Referee should reward the Travellers appropriately if they succeed. If the attempt to obtain enough supplies is to be abstracted, then the Travellers may try each of the following once. Each attempt must be made by a different Traveller or segment of the crew.

Beg, Bargain and Bribe: Make an Average (8+) Persuade or Diplomat check to trade a few things another unit wanted, call in favours and generally work the system. This produces 1D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect.

Go Through Channels: Make an Average (8+) Admin or Advocate check to push through an expedited requisition. This produces 2D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect. Effect 0 produces an irritatingly vague acknowledgement that the problem will be given due consideration.

No Details: Make a Difficult (10+) Streetwise check to obtain supplies by 'some other means', which the commanding officer really does not want to know about. This produces 3D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect and possibly repercussions immediately or later.

Go Outside the System: Solutions like raiding stealing supplies from other units or government stockpiles are the subject of adventures and should be played out in detail.

Plundering

Ammunition, rations and necessary components can often be obtained from dead or captured enemy personnel or from comrades unable to fight on. Plundering a similar unit will typically yield 2D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Recon check. This may be reduced if the enemy unit uses very different equipment or was also short of supplies.

Plundering a civilian area – generally referred to as 'looting' by the War Crimes Commissions but sometimes justifiable if presented in the right way – will produce 1D days' worth of non-combat supplies per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Streetwise check. A company-sized unit can plunder a modest sized village in a few hours or less if care is not taken to avoid unnecessary destruction. Methodically moving through a town or city can yield reasonable amounts of food and other supplies but relatively little ammunition. A unit supporting itself in this manner might end up placing its advanced weapons in storage and using local civilian small arms until stocks of ammunition are rebuilt.

INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE

Information is vital to military operations and intelligence supplied to a unit can be notoriously patchy or inaccurate. A wise mercenary commander establishes their own sources of intelligence and many larger mercenary units have an intelligence detachment of their own. There are even mercenary intelligence gathering and analysis units, which specialise in obtaining accurate information and getting it into the right hands.

Deception is a major part of warfare and the mercenaries may be able to gain an advantage by deceiving their enemies. On the other hand they may fall for a deception carried out by the enemy or simply misinterpret information made available to them. Bad information can be used as a plot device by the Referee in many ways. A treacherous patron who wants to eliminate the mercenaries rather than pay them might send them into a death-trap or arrange for them to be put in a position where they can be blamed for an atrocity. Patrons might also misrepresent the situation to get the mercenaries to take a job they otherwise would not or to get them to agree a lower fee. It might be that the patron has been deceived by someone else, creating a situation where the patron feeds bad information to the mercenaries in good faith.

Obtaining good intelligence might be the focus of a mission or could be something the Travellers feel they need to do before plunging into a situation. Either way, there are two main kinds of intelligence that can be sought.

Routine intelligence gathering is carried out all the time. Direct methods include reports made by personnel and vehicles conducting reconnaissance, satellite imagery feeds and interception of enemy transmissions. Routine intelligence gathering produces a great deal of raw data that must be collated to search for patterns and anomalies. For example, a unit may keep drones in the air watching the local area but finding a pattern in the movements of local traffic requires considerable analysis work. A shift in that pattern can provide warning that something is happening.

Specific intelligence gathering has a particular objective in mind. For example, a sub-unit might be sent to conduct reconnaissance of a nearby area in order to build an estimate of hostile forces present and the ability of the enemy regional command to support those forces. This in turn can lead to a good estimate of whether or not an offensive can be expected from that direction. Alternatively, the unit might set out to recruit informants or snatch enemy officers for interrogation.

Intelligence Events

An Intelligence Event is a point at which the quality of information available or its analysis needs to be determined. One normally occurs at the beginning of a mission or ticket, determining the sort of information available at that time. The Travellers may decide to conduct more analysis or gather better data before acting.

Adventure leads or plot-related information gleaned from analysis of routine intelligence gathering are best used as a plot device, with information becoming available when the Referee wants to reveal it. Analysis normally takes a predictable length of time. That is, the intelligence staff will have some answers at round about the time they say they will. However, accuracy is improved by taking longer and cross-referencing more. It is unrealistic to expect every piece of routine analysis to be conducted in this manner however; it is a big job and very time-consuming. The normal practice is to conduct routine analysis at a standard rate and focus in on anything that stands out.

Intelligence analysis uses the Investigate skill, although raw data may be gathered by various means using a range of skills. The Referee should call for an Investigate check using the intelligence's officer's skill or relevant Efficiency Index. Normal difficulty is Average (8+) for routine analysis. The Referee may wish to make this check in secret, ensuring the Travellers do not know how accurate their information is. Alternatively, the check can be made openly and the result used to modify further checks to abstract the next operation undertaken by the Travellers' unit.

Specialist intelligence-analysis software packages are available, which can automatically generate useable information from a mass of raw data. Their output is rather simplistic unless they are used by a trained intelligence analyst. If the Travellers want to rely on auto-analysis the Referee is justified in presenting the information in an almost oracular way on some occasions, in this case the device does what it is programmed to do but the Travellers' interpretation skills are lacking. On other occasions an auto-analysis unit will provide clear and simple information that is correct but may not be the whole story. A basic auto-analysis package and a secure portacomp to run it on costs MCr1. There are usually restrictions on the sale of such devices, requiring accredited mercenary status. This can be circumvented using the black market but costs are higher. A basic auto-analysis unit is treated as having Investigate 0 for the purposes of military intelligence analysis only.

Intelligence Events

Effect of Investigate Check	Result
–6 or worse	Information is confusing, contradictory and basically useless. DM-4 applies to mission or operation resolution until better information is available.
–4 to -–5	Information seems reasonably comprehensive and reliable but contains serious omissions and errors. DM-1 applies to mission and operation resolution and an Incident occurs.
–3 to –1	Partial information is available but inaccurate in places or has serious gaps. DM-2 applies to mission and operation resolution.
0	Sufficient information is available but vague or patchy and contains a number of inaccuracies. DM-1 applies to mission and operation resolution.
1–3	Sufficient information is available and reasonably reliable. No modifier is applied to mission and operation resolution.
3–5	Good, solid intelligence is available. DM+1 applies to mission and operation resolution.
6 or better	Good, solid intelligence is available. DM+2 applies to mission and operation resolution. In addition, an unexpected opportunity is spotted.

Intelligence Missions

Deliberate gathering of intelligence, such as a drone overflight of a suspected insurgent base or a patrol sent deep into enemy territory may be the stuff of adventures, especially if something goes awry. Alternatively, it can be abstracted using the standard mission segment resolution system (see page 72). Information gathered must still be analysed and collated but when the Travellers have gone to the trouble of obtaining data by their own efforts they should usually be rewarded with reliable intelligence… unless of course someone wanted them to obtain and believe deceptive information.

CAMPAIGN EVENTS

Campaign Events typically occur between tickets but could happen during one. To qualify as a Campaign Event, an incident must have some effect on the political situation or the ability of the Travellers to carry out their missions. This could be something as grand as the outbreak of a major war or the arrest of a local leader to face charges of treason but might be much narrower in focus such as an incident depriving the Travellers' unit of its regular source of supplies.

The Referee can impose Campaign Events they see fit, although it is worth thinking through the implications. If war breaks out today, it will still be going on for the next few months. This could take the campaign in an unexpected direction – which might be good or may derail the intended plot. It is therefore best to keep incidents below the threshold of setting-changing events unless the Referee wants something big to happen.

How often Campaign Events take place is a matter for Referee discretion. As a rule of thumb, roll 2D before each ticket. On 8+ an incident will occur before or during it.

Campaign Events

2D	Event
2	Rumours of War: A potentially major incident takes places within a few parsecs, threatening the stability of the local area or war with an external power. This situation will be ongoing for months or even years and can affect the mercenaries directly or indirectly.
3	Local Conflict: A minor conflict, possibly unrelated to the current ticket, breaks out wherever the Travellers are operating. The situation is complex and has the potential to spread.
4	Mutiny: An allied unit goes over to the other side or mutinies against its officers. Members of the mercenary unit may be caught up in the situation. The unit might come under pressure to resolve the situation or to join the mutineers… or both.
5	Nearby Incident: The rumour mill is abuzz with talk of a locally significant incident. This might be a flare-up in an insurrection or sabre-rattling between a government and a corporate entity that threatens to escalate. Details are sketchy as yet but there is reason to believe the local situation might be destabilised in the immediate future unless action is taken.
6	Distant Incident: A major incident has occurred outside the Travellers' immediate area of interest. This will have repercussions at some point, such as an influx of experienced soldiers or insurgents displaced by a conflict ending.
7	Show of Force: The mercenaries are hired to be part of a show of force that is not expected to escalate into conflict. This might be an effort to deter aggression or to demonstrate intent ahead of a treaty or corporate negotiation. The fee is low but the assignment promises to be safe; an opportunity to rest, train and integrate some new recruits. Occasionally such a contract is not what it seems.
8	Thinned Out: Just after taking on a new contract the unit discovers that its allies or local support are being heavily depleted to deal with needs arising elsewhere.
9	Reinforced: Additional units are assigned to the area. These might be mercenaries or local forces and may be an asset or a hindrance.
10	Redeployment: Friendly units are suddenly redeployed. This may include the mercenaries, who might be sent to an entirely different area with an environment they are not trained or equipped for. Alternatively, local forces are redeployed, perhaps requiring unreliable units to take on an important role.
11	Command Reshuffle: A senior officer is suddenly transferred, promoted or cashiered, leaving a hole in the command structure that must be filled. Local forces are thrown into confusion for a few weeks, with garbled orders and unaccountable delays in receiving resupply.
12	Top Brass: Local forces are selected to receive a visit from the top brass or nobility. Local commanders are determined to look as good as possible, imposing additional tasks on units under their command whilst requiring them to be as presentable as possible.

CHAPTER - FIVE

TICKETS

A mercenary campaign is likely to take the form of a series of contracts, or tickets, which may or may not be related to one another. A ticket specifies what sort of unit is required and what it will be expected to do. The details are generally left to the discretion of the mercenary commanders, although most clients will want 'clean' or at least deniable operations. Some tickets can be carried out by a variety of unit types but some require specialist capabilities.

A ticket will specify the success conditions insisted upon by the client. In some cases, known as success-only tickets, the mercenary force can only expect payment in the event that the ticket success criteria are satisfied. It is sometimes possible for a mercenary force to extract payment from an unwilling client by legal means or strongarm tactics but on the whole the more a unit achieves the more likely it is to be paid without argument.

COMMANDO

A commando ticket is usually short and payable for success only. It will usually require the unit to get deep into enemy territory and eliminate or capture something or someone. More general mayhem is also possible, especially in an ongoing conflict and in some cases the contract will call for multiple raids against sensitive targets. A set of such raids can leave an enemy leaderless, lacking in supplies and confused; chasing shadows around the rear area whilst large-scale forces are advancing through the border zone.

Commando missions require small, highly capable forces capable of striking hard and by surprise. Suitable units often have a commando element and a larger intelligence/infiltration/exfiltration and support element, although this is not always the case. The 'contact' element of a commando unit is rarely larger than a platoon and usually smaller, especially where battle dress equipped troops are concerned.

STRIKER

Striker tickets are similar to commando contracts but tend to be larger in scale and less subtle in setup. Where a commando force will typically infiltrate enemy territory by stealth and sometimes deception, a striker unit is more likely to rely on speed and firepower to dash through to the objective. Surprise is still valuable and deception will be employed, if possible, but striker missions are more blatant than commando raids, generally more destructive and less deniable.

Striker contracts require a force with high direct-fire capability, good mobility and usually some support in the form of artillery or aerospace platforms mounting direct-fire weapons or missiles. Strike formations are typically platoon- or company-sized, with the occasional battalion-sized force commanding a very high fee. A striker unit can inflict a series of sharp blows on an enemy force, especially one of lower Tech Level, causing it to collapse or crumble in the face of massed attack by local units.

WARFIGHTING

Warfighting tickets are usually long-term, in the sense of months or 'duration of hostilities'. The mercenary unit will normally be integrated into the local forces' command structure, possibly as part of an entire army built out of mercenary formations. This can work well when units respect one another but rivalries or even enmity stemming from being on opposite sides in the past can get in the way of cooperation.

Unless a large force is being built out of company-sized units – which is a challenge, to say the least – warfighting is usually the preserve of battalion-sized or larger formations. Smaller units may also be hired to stiffen local formations or carry out critical missions – a small command or strike unit can be hired on a warfighting contract if the need is perceived but large ready-made combat forces are preferred by most clients.

CADRE

A cadre ticket is generally synonymous with 'providing training and leadership to local forces', although occasionally a different take on the term is encountered. Cadre units must be capable of fighting and may be called upon to accompany their students in action but their primary role is to increase the capabilities of local forces. This may be through formally delivered training, although some cadre units deploy as the framework of a battalion or even larger force and take in local recruits to create full-sized combat forces. Once the local unit is capable of operating without the embedded mercenaries they are withdrawn to begin the process with new recruits.

Cadre units often have a number of personnel equivalent to a reinforced company but are structured as a battalion or even a higher formation. Some of the unit's personnel are dedicated training staff including simulator operators and exercise umpires but most will be combat-experienced in some capacity. Sometimes equipment if very mixed, allowing local forces to gain experience of a range of commonly-available systems. In addition to serving as a training formation or what is essentially a temporary military academy, some cadre forces are equipped to serve as 'OPFORS' units, simulating likely enemies' capabilities and tactics.

An alternative form of cadre ticket requires a highly specialised force type capable of conducting a force review and advising a local government on what sort of equipment it needs to procure. Most such units are capable of demonstrating why these capabilities are needed, at least on a small scale, and have the contacts to obtain what is needed. The contract usually includes the provision of training to bring the local force up to an adequate standard with its new equipment or in its new role.

SECURITY

Security tickets typically require a small force – platoon or smaller – to protect an installation or person. There are exceptions, however. Specialist security battalions exist that can protect a centre of government against a wide range of threats. Such forces usually have electronic warfare, cyber-security, aerospace defence and nuclear damper capabilities as well as physical combat assets.

Some security units specialise in bodyguard work or transporting valuable items, whilst others provide a ready-made law enforcement or installation security package. The latter is common in the corporate sector, where an installation might be under threat from insurgents, protestors or a world government that has taken a dislike to the installation's owners. Equipment can thus vary considerably but one thing most security units have in common is more boots on the ground than a striker or warfighting unit.

SUPPORT

Support tickets are almost always specific to a unit type or set of capabilities that are not connected with direct ground combat. Examples include electronic warfare, intelligence, logistics and medical units, and more commonly artillery and aerospace defence. Support formations often have a good working relationship with other mercenary units and may have assisted them in the past but equally they may have at one point shelled the unit they are now hired to support.

Most support units are relatively small; typically platoon- or company-sized and the larger ones are often diverse. An example would be an artillery company that has three platoons of artillery weapons, an aerospace defence platoon and a security/logistics platoon to keep the guns supplied with ammunition. Larger formations do exist, commanding a huge fee to provide a planetary government with ready-made anti-orbital defences or heavy artillery to support its front-line ground troops.

SPECIALIST

The specialist category is something of a catch-all for tickets that do not fit in another category or require unusual skills or equipment. Specialist tickets are also offered for small units (typically squad or section) or even individuals. Examples include a need for a cyber-warfare team for a covert operation or a commander for the world's aerospace defence network. It is not uncommon for a cadre mission to create a reasonable capability but for ongoing leadership to be necessary in order to maintain and make best use of it. In this case the cadre unit may not want to leave personnel behind so might recommend an individual or the patron may choose to hire someone either to train a local commander or as a long-term holder of the position. It is possible for a mercenary unit to run into a former member who is now a high-ranking officer in a planetary force or who is known to unit members from their regular service days elsewhere.

STRUCTURE OF A TICKET

A mercenary ticket is not the same thing as a typical Traveller adventure. In fact an entire ticket could be completed without anything that would be considered an adventure taking place. This is not usually the case; a ticket can spawn many small adventures to be played out with the standard rules but it is not structured like the typical adventure.

A ticket will specify a set of criteria the client wants to be met and the success (or otherwise) of the ticket is based on whether the client thinks these were met. No matter what awesome heroics the unit performed, even if they kerb-stomped their opponents and roared to victory without apparent effort, what matters is client satisfaction. Similarly, it may be possible to convince the client that the unit did better than they actually did. This is risky, as a unit that gains a reputation for faking success to claim its fee may find itself out of business.

A ticket is subdivided into missions and those are further divided into operations. Tickets and missions should be self-contained, although they may chain together into a larger narrative. The routine daily life of the mercenaries – which includes some hazardous activities – are normally glossed over until something out of the ordinary happens. Even a brief exchange of fire with local insurgents might be all in a day's work for experienced mercenaries; it is not until things get tough or something goes wrong that the mission becomes interesting.

A ticket should have a distinct beginning and end, as should the missions required to complete it. Within a mission it is likely there will be multiple operations, which are also self-contained. Indeed, every action should have a distinct start and stop. The difference between a mission and an operation is in terms of simplicity and focus; an operation has a single goal such as 'clear insurgents from the town hall' whereas a mission might have multiple such targets. Any action that can be subdivided into single-goal tasks is a mission – but a mission can be resolved as a whole or subdivided at the Referee's discretion.

Sometimes missions or operations must be carried out simultaneously. For this reason a mission is subdivided into phases if necessary. Once all operations in that phase are resolved the mission can progress to the next phase – but note that 'resolved' does not mean 'successful'. The mercenary commanders will have to decide to progress or abort the mission if some of the operations fail. They may also decide to move to the next phase without completing an operation if necessary. The timing of a phase is noted if relevant. For a short mission, timing tends to be rapid and on an 'as soon as ready' basis but missions requiring some preparation may have timings over several days. These can always be altered on the commander's orders but messing with the timetable can dislocate the whole mission.

Example

A commando mission has the following phase. Operation 1 requires the assault team to move into position and eliminate the outer guards silently using knives and similar stealthy methods. Operation 2 requires the unit's two snipers to eliminate inaccessible guards, at which point Operation 3 is launched. This is a 'loud' entry to the target building and elimination of the remaining opposition.

In the event, resolution of Operation 1 goes poorly and the mercenaries are detected before they can eliminate the roving guards. The mercenary commander orders Operation 2 implemented and adds an order to 'take out any other guards you see'. The snipers try to do this and again it goes poorly. Although there are still guards active, the commander really has no choice but to go to Operation 3 or abort the whole phase.

Tickets and Subdivisions

Ticket: A set of tasks and objectives leading to an overall goal desired by the client.
Mission: A complex task carried out by the mercenary unit or part of it.
Phase: A group of operations within a mission.
Operation: A specific job undertaken as part of a mission.

Example Mission

A company of mercenaries have been hired on a striker ticket to clear insurgents from a given area. Local forces are conducting a standard cordon-and-sweep but when a significant pocket of resistance is identified they pull back and send in the mercenaries. Each clearance is a separate mission. On this occasion, orders arrive to clear insurgents from a village that is thought to contain no non-combatants. The mercenaries are unwilling to trust the local intelligence network as it has been wrong on several occasions before. The commander plans a mission to account for this, setting it up in distinct phases.

Mission: Clear Village WB-05 of insurgents.
Mission Start: Force arrives in proximity to target.
Phase 1: Hours of darkness.
  Operation: Sniper/recon team establishes observation position.
Phase 2: First light.
Operation: Company moves into position on foot and awaits final go order.
  Operation: Drone overflight of village and observation.
Phase 3: As determined by mission commander.
  Operation: First Platoon secures building A-12 and sets up fire support position.
Phase 4: As determined by mission commander.
  Operation: Support Platoon delivers RPG/mortar strike on parked vehicles at point V-1.
  Operation: Second and Third platoon commence clearance of buildings.
Mission End: Force withdraws under cover of First and Support Platoons and sniper detachment.

There is no guarantee any of this will go according to plan. If the insurgents are alerted what would have been a surprise dawn raid might become a protracted firefight. If the insurgents have hostages or non-combatants in the village and these are detected by the drones or sniper/recon team the plan may have to be modified. Such is the nature of military operations and the mercenaries may well have to invent operations on the fly. However, whilst plans tend to disintegrate as soon as the enemy gets involved, the action of planning is invaluable. A force that just wanders in, guns blazing, will find it harder to obtain recruits to replace the inevitable and wholly unnecessary casualties.

MISSION PLANNING

A mission begins when the unit commander decides something needs to be done and issues some orders to make it happen. The reason for the mission might be simply the whim of the commander, or an unexpected opportunity, but commonly the mission is part of a plan created to allow the overall ticket to be completed. If the mercenaries are forced to carry out something that has the components of a mission but has not been ordered by their commander – for example defending their base from an unexpected attack – this is also considered to be a mission.

Before a mission commences the Travellers should be given the opportunity to make a plan unless events are beyond their control. It is not desirable to allow too much time for fiddling about with the details in the hope of coming up with a perfect mission but a planning session that results in a well-formatted written mission plan should be rewarded with improved performance. The same applies to contingency planning – if the Travellers have taken the time to prepare a defence plan for their base of operations they can implement it even if they are caught by surprise by an attack. A good plan is worth DM+1 on all resolution checks and in rare cases it may be worth DM+2. This only applies if the plan is sound and goes off almost flawlessly.

For example, the mercenaries have made a plan to eliminate the guards, enter the target building and snatch a high value target (HVT) before retiring covered by a blocking force. The Referee deems the plan workable and grants DM+2 on resolution checks during the early phases. Things go off-script after a while, as the Travellers scramble to deal with an unexpected complication and a failed resolution check on an important operation. The plan – or rather the thought that went into making it – is still worth DM+1 on resolution checks for the rest of the mission despite the mercenaries improvising much of what they do.

Later, they are caught completely by surprise by an attack on their base where the HVT is being held. Despite the fact that comms are down and the Travellers have no idea what is happening outside their field of view the mercenaries still respond well – gaining DM+1 to their resolution checks – because they have pre-rehearsed drills to fall back on and a good idea what other members of the unit will be trying to do. Cooperation and mutual assistance is better than if everyone was just responding on the fly.

ORDERS FROM THE CLIENT

In theory, the situation is quite clear regarding instructions and orders from the client. The mercenaries have been hired and must obey their orders… but the reality is far more complex than that. A contract will normally specify who can give orders (or make 'contract-compliant requests') to the mercenaries and how the chain of command will operate. Anyone outside this chain of command has no authority to give orders to the mercenaries and they are not breaching their contract if they ignore them. However, just because someone is not entitled to order the mercenaries around does not mean they will be happy to have their orders dismissed. The unit's leader may have to smooth over all manner of incidents arising from mercenaries being 'insufficiently respectful' – which usually means obedient, although some clients expect deference and decorum that does not sit well with career soldiers. In some cases it is useful to comply with some orders from outside the chain of command, although at the same time the mercenaries must not establish a precedent. In an ideal world the solution is for the client to make polite requests and the mercenaries to comply 'as a courtesy'. Few tickets take place in this ideal environment, however.

There is also the problem of illegal or questionable orders. Clients sometimes want the mercenaries to do their dirty work for them or to use their hired professionals as cannon fodder. Some orders are legal and comply with contract terms but will place the mercenaries in a compromised position. Others are legal in terms of the agreement in place but illegal under interstellar law. The situation sometimes arises where the mercenaries are expected to quietly 'not notice' that local troops are torturing or murdering captives or even to turn them over after guaranteeing their safety.

This creates a minefield that has to be negotiated by the unit's commanders and even if they have a good working practice in place the situation can be made very awkward by individuals within the unit. Someone with a conscience in a unit that has decided to place theirs in storage for this mission can compromise the whole unit, as can someone with unusual personal views. The Travellers might find themselves facing demands to surrender some of their personnel to local justice – which is known to be corrupt and vicious – regarding offences they may or may not have committed.

Mercenaries within a unit must follow that unit's practices regarding orders from their superiors. Usually this is a standard system of punishments, financial forfeitures and possible dismissal from the unit for serious or persistent disobedience. Small units cannot afford much of a penal system and will usually fine, suspend or dismiss a troublesome soldier but larger formations may have penal units who are permitted to atone for their (sometimes frequent) transgressions by taking on a dangerous assignment. An interesting variant on the mercenary campaign might be a penal unit hired out to pay the members' debt to society.

Orders from outside the unit normally have to go through a designated officer – usually the commander but a representative may be appointed. Some clients try to micromanage their mercenaries, to the aggravation of everyone concerned. A wise commander learns how to accommodate the wishes of the client without surrendering to constant oversight but sometimes orders are given anyway.

Any mercenary receiving orders from anyone, whether they are in the chain of command or not, must decide whether to accept and acknowledge the order, request clarification, suggest a reason why the orders are unworkable, acknowledge under protest or refuse the order.

Accept and Acknowledge: This is the usual course of action for most orders, written or verbal. Standard practice is to acknowledge the order with a suitable honorific, along the lines of a simple 'yes, sir' but some units prefer complex or critical orders to be repeated back with acknowledgement. For formal orders to a mercenary commander from the client, an authenticated transmission stating 'orders received and acknowledged' and including a copy of the orders is standard practice. In the event of a dispute or allegations, it is thus possible to prove that what the unit was ordered to do and that it accepted the order.

Acknowledge Under Protest: This is a statement that the mercenary will try to carry out the orders but does not agree with them for some reason. Examples might include an order to take questionable actions such as shelling a village thought to contain civilians or to make an extremely dangerous assault that is not likely to succeed. Protesting an order does not absolve a mercenary of responsibility for carrying it out but may be used at an inquiry into the superior or client's conduct.

Request Clarification: A request for clarification is sometimes used to politely suggest that the mercenary thinks the orders are unworkable or reckless and it is prudent not to mention the fact if new orders arrive that do not resemble the original ones. Sometimes, however, a request for clarification is simply that. This may be necessitated when there are confusing circumstances the order's issuer has not accounted for or is not aware of. Clarification may be required in a complex situation and can give the superior a chance to revise the order to something more suitable without making an issue of it.

Decline with Reason: It is legitimate to decline an order that simply cannot be carried out. This might happen for physical reasons such as the artillery ammunition still being in crates at a starport on another continent. On other occasions the mercenary may have orders or standing procedures that prevent compliance. An officer who expects an imminent air attack on their position might declare they cannot comply with an order to move out. Technically, the unit could do so but leaving its cover would expose it to debilitating casualties so in this case circumstances prevent compliance under all but the most desperate of circumstances. The decision to decline an order will be called into question, so this is not something to be done lightly.

Refuse the Order: Orders that come from outside the chain of command can be legitimately refused – although as noted above it may be wise to do so in a diplomatic manner. Refusal to obey legitimate orders is a serious offence in all mercenary units and some treat it as mutiny no matter what the circumstances.

INAPPROPRIATE ORDERS

Mercenaries have to deal with a lot of inappropriate orders in their careers. In many cases compliance is not mandatory but may be wise or greatly appreciated by the client. For example, a mercenary unit supporting local troops receives an order from a nearby unit to put down artillery fire on enemies forming up for an attack. This is an illegal order since it has not come down the mercenaries' chain of command and could be legally ignored – although the client might want to know why their forces were not supported. The battery commander might ask the overall unit commander what to do and if the order is repeated from within the chain of command then the situation is clear. Alternatively, the battery commander might acknowledge, logging a 'request' for support from local allies and comply.

In addition to coming in through an illegitimate route a set of orders can be inappropriate or problematical in other ways.

Conflicting Orders may require a unit to do something that makes its primary mission impossible. Conflict between standing orders and a specific order is one option but a more insidious one is to order the unit's commander to do something that sounds innocuous such as conduct reconnaissance in force in a particular area then order the unit to move to another location on a short time frame.

Vague or Compromising Orders do not always look questionable but along the way it will become apparent that the unit has been sent into a dangerous situation without clear guidance on what to do. A mercenary commander whose force has been hired on a peacekeeping ticket to 'be a stabilising influence and prevent the outbreak of war' between two allied powers arrives to find the fighting has already begun… and has no orders for this contingency. Or the force arrives in time to find one faction massing for a surprise attack. The mercenaries could prevent the attack but only by firing on the aggressors, which will start the war they have been sent to prevent…

Incomprehensible Orders require the unit to do something it cannot, perhaps because it lacks necessary equipment. Orders to move that are not accompanied by the provision of transportation; orders to conduct an artillery barrage issued to a medical unit… the possibilities for subtle and gross confusion are endless.

TICKET SUCCESS INDICATOR (TSI)

When a client hires mercenaries, they are a means to an end. The client wants a job done or a set of outcomes presented to them. It is rare that the means by which these outcomes are achieved is of great importance; generally a client will be happy to have their problem resolved and not all that concerned whether the enemy was driven out of the disputed territory or conducted a negotiated withdrawal. There are exceptions, of course. Sometimes a client wants to 'teach a lesson' to some enemy by inflicting a defeat or has a specific need to see tanks, not infantry, rolling into a particular location. Such criteria must be specified in the ticket if the client is to be sure they will be fulfilled. Those who fail to make clear what they want from the mercenaries may be disappointed, whereas those who over-specify might find themselves paying a much higher fee if the mercenaries agree to the job at all.

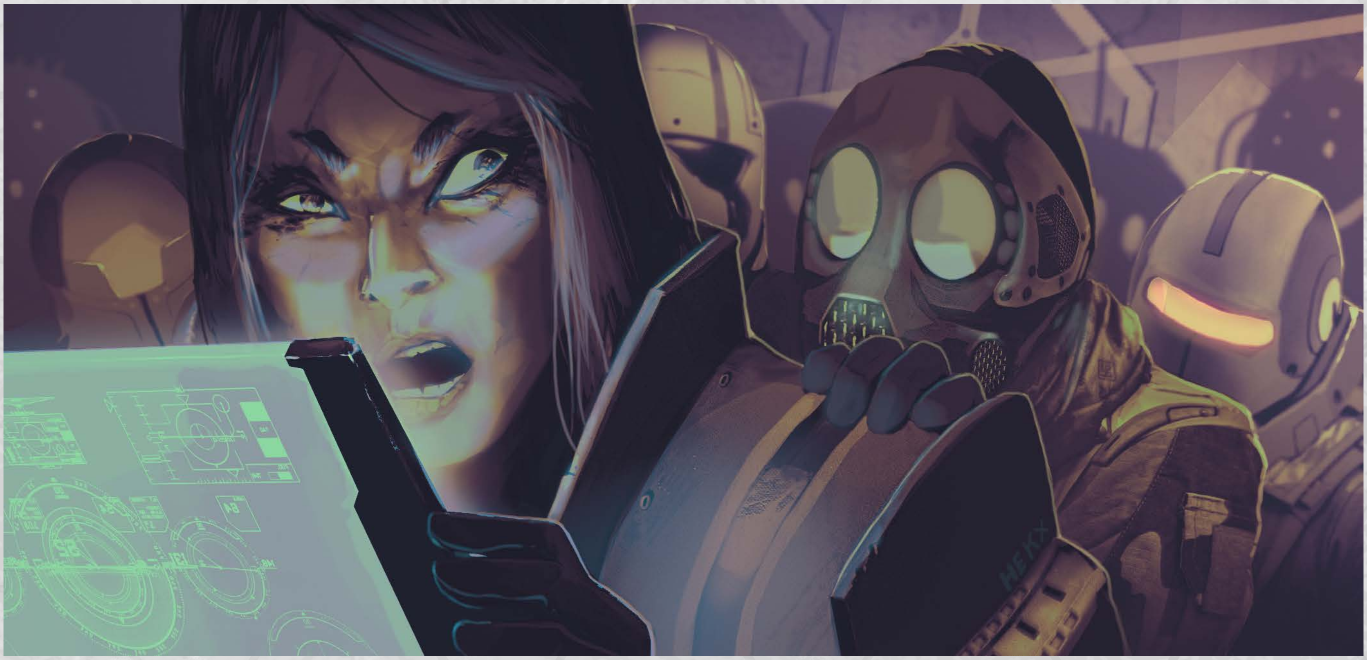
The Ticket Success Indicator, or TSI, is used to determine the client's degree of satisfaction. It takes the form of a set of criteria that are awarded differing points values. The higher the TSI at the end of the ticket, the happier the client. TSI criteria are usually apparent from the wording of the contract but tickets are not written in game-mechanic terms. It may be that the client's expectations differ slightly from the success criteria mentioned in the ticket. Usually the difference is small but some clients do not reveal their plans to the mercenaries they hire, instead placing them in a situation where the mercenary unit will provide the desired outcome whilst trying to achieve something else. It is also possible for circumstances to force a change to the success criteria. Someone who hired mercenaries to win a war might end up being happy just to survive the ensuing disaster. If they accept the mercenary force was not at fault the client might consider them successful even if all they do is keep the client and their associates safe.

For example, a client wants to start a war between two factions on a balkanised planet. This is not explicitly stated in the ticket as the client wants to be able to deny responsibility. Instead the client hires mercenaries to undertake provocative actions under the guise of pursuing a legitimate aim. The client might choose to make their real intentions known to the mercenaries, or not. In the event that the mercenary force carries out the missions and achieves all the stated goals they can claim success and payment but the client will not be satisfied. This can create interesting situations that go beyond battlefield tactics. Suppose the Travellers figure out what is going on partway through their contract… should they just give the client what they want or cleverly honour their contract in a way that does not cost countless lives in a needless war.

On a smaller scale, the mercenaries might be given a task that seems legitimate but has an undeclared personal dimension. For example they might be sent to remove insurgents who have taken over a small town and given information on the nastiest of them in the hope they will shoot on sight or hand them over in a way that allows a deniable liquidation. Unknown to the mercenaries, one of the targets is actually a journalist who has committed no atrocities but offended the client in some way. In both these situations the client will not openly state their real intentions but may try to wriggle out of paying if the mercenaries do not deliver. A disappointed or outwitted client might also become an enemy of the mercenary unit.

When a ticket is created, the Referee must determine the TSI criteria and their points value. The standard number of criteria is five, although it is possible to increase or reduce this number if necessary. A ticket can be quite straightforward and still have a full five success criteria, with most representing small additional successes. Criteria tend to be quite broad in scope, encompassing minor actions. Having large numbers of criteria suggests excessive micromanagement.

TSI should be kept as a running total by the Referee and never directly revealed to the Travellers. There will be indications that things are going well or badly along the way but the Travellers should not know the exact criteria, the precise value of those criteria or their ‘score’ so far. They can figure most of this out, close enough, if they want to and this is part of the challenge of a mercenary campaign. Note that TSI criteria are for the ticket as the Referee knows it will play out, not the situation as initially presented to the Travellers. There is no need to create a criterion for an event the Referee knows will not happen due to a plot twist, although if the Travellers take actions that require the ticket to be re-evaluated the TSI criteria may have to be altered.



Each objective has a status: Paramount, Critical, Routine or Optional, and the degree to which it is achieved is rated as follows: Complete, Partial, Marginal,and Failed. The Referee will decide how well a particular goal was achieved and award TSI points accordingly. This score might be altered if the Travellers realise they have made an error and take remedial action. For example, if the Travellers were not informed of the value of a particular individual the client secretly hoped they would capture, that secret criterion would be noted as failed and TSI points deducted accordingly. If the Travellers later figured out what had happened and launched a mission on their own initiative to grab the target the client is likely to be delighted and the criterion upgraded to a success. This is an example of how the outcome matters to the client far more than the details of how it happened.

Mission Success

Degree of Success	Meaning
Complete	The goal is fully and provably completed, with evidence in the form of reconnaissance data or observation by reliable witnesses.
Partial	The goal is more or less completed but there are a few loose ends or the evidence of completion is inconclusive. Most objectives are completed to this degree. Some clients will demand perfection but mercenaries know this is rarely achievable. With some persuasion the client will usually settle for 'good enough'.
Marginal	The objective is partially completed. For example an insurgency is seriously disrupted but not fully quelled or only some of the desired territory was seized. Marginal success is 'not quite good enough' but will be accepted by most clients unless it is frequently repeated.
Failed	A failed objective is just that. The Travellers are defeated and their attack repelled, or they fail to train local troops up to an adequate standard.

Paramount: If the mercenaries take a success-only ticket it is likely to have a Paramount objective – possibly more than one. If it is not accomplished the ticket will be considered a complete failure. Many tickets will not have a Paramount objective, although the client might talk like every little detail is of paramount importance. Very few tickets that are not success-only will have a Paramount objective, since mercenaries are professionals rather than do-or-die zealots or patriots.

At All Costs!

A Paramount objective is typically accompanied by dire warnings that it must be accomplished 'at all costs' and sometimes even quite minor objectives are phrased in this way. Mercenaries do not like this term at all – they are paid to fight and take risks, not to throw away their lives over something they may not consider important at all. A genuine all-costs mission might be undertaken for a vast fee or by a desperate unit but most commanders will politely ask if the objective is really that important. If the answer is yes, the client will need to find someone willing to die for it. Not all Paramount objectives are like this however. In many cases Paramount simply means that the whole ticket will be a failure if this part of it is not accomplished. A mercenary unit agrees to make a credible attempt to complete the ticket, not to die to the last soldier, so may have to accept that they will not get paid. This happens sometimes in the mercenary trade. Some clients will over-inflate the importance of a difficult objective then use failure as an excuse not to pay the full fee – or any of it in some cases. Avoiding this sort of pitfall is part of being a successful mercenary commander.

Critical: This objective is extremely important and worth taking severe risks for. The client considers it worth the mercenary unit taking significant casualties and is willing to pay for them to take that risk. Not all tickets have a Critical objective and very few will have more than one. If a Critical objective is assigned, the ticket overall is likely to be considered to be a failure if it is not achieved. A ticket with a Critical objective will command a higher fee unless the client is misrepresenting the situation.

Important: The primary focus of the ticket is normally one or more Important objectives. Commonly a ticket will have one Important objective and four Routine objectives but this can vary.

Routine: This is the normal level of importance for an objective. A failed Routine objective does not mean the ticket as a whole is a failure. TSI is totalled normally and the outcome determined using the Mission Outcome table.

The Ticket Success Criteria table below indicates the TSI points awarded for different levels of success.

Ticket Success Criteria

Criteria Level	Complete	Partial	Marginal	Failure
Paramount	5	3	1	–12
Critical	4	2	1	–8
Important	3	2	1	–4
Routine	2	1	0	–2

Determining Ticket Success

The maximum score possible for a ticket depends upon the objectives set. In theory it can range from 10 for a mission with only Routine objectives to 20 for five Critical objectives. It is unlikely that a ticket would ever be so important; normally a mix of Important and Routine objectives gives a maximum TSI of around 12–13.

It is possible to create a negative result if things go badly wrong. TSI should be used in conjunction with the Referee's judgement where necessary; if the Travellers complete their missions and in addition deal with multiple random events thrown up by the Incident tables, they may please the client greatly but are unlikely to be given bonus payments unless the contract stipulated these. A pleased client will seek out the mercenaries' services again and may recommend them to others – and the mercenaries themselves may use their highly successful ticket as a marketing point.

At the end of the ticket the mercenary force commander or representatives of the unit will hold a meeting – which may or may not be in person – with the client and finalise the ticket. There will also usually be some form of what amounts to a debriefing. This might be with the mercenary unit commander, the client, local government representatives or even journalists covering the conflict. However it happens, the Referee should arrange for the mercenaries to answer some Tough Questions about their ticket.

Ticket Outcome

TSI	Outcome
–6 or less	A debacle. It is possible the unit commander and some personnel may be subject to legal action for their actions, or that the unit will have to conduct internal disciplinary proceedings. The unit loses 1D+1 REP.
–5 to –1	The ticket was a disaster. The unit loses –D3 REP and may forfeit part of all of its fee depending on contract terms.
0–3	The ticket was a failure. The unit loses –1 REP and may forfeit part of all of its fee depending on contract terms. The unit is expected to fail in future and suffers –D3 to its TSI for all subsequent tickets until a success is recorded.
4–6	The ticket was at best a marginal success. The unit may forfeit part of all of its fee depending on contract terms. The unit is expected to fail in future and suffers –1 to its TSI for all subsequent tickets until a success is recorded.
7–9	The ticket is judged a success, although the mercenaries' performance was lacklustre and uninspiring.
10–12	The client is satisfied with the unit's performance and would recommend or hire them again.
13–15	The client is pleased with the unit performance and has a few good things to say about certain personnel or actions. MOR increases by +1.
16–18	The client gushes with praise for an excellent performance. MOR is increased by +1 and REP increases by +1.
19–21	The unit receives respect and even adulation from prominent mercenaries or officials. MOR is increased by +1 and REP increases by +1. Clever Travellers may be able to leverage the respect they have earned in future negotiations, gaining DM+1 when making checks to interact with a current or prospective client, allied mercenary units and similar contacts.
22 or more	As 19–21, plus the ticket is considered a shining example of how mercenaries should operate and is studied in training courses. MOR is increased by +1 and REP increases by +1. The client may offer rewards in the form of money, contacts or maybe a parade. This may be embarrassing rather than pleasing to the mercenaries.

Typically the Referee will ask the Travellers Three Tough Questions about their mission. These can be about specific actions, such as ‘you deliberately failed to inform your local support units or your liaison about your strike until you had already launched it. Please explain this decision’. Alternatively the questions might be broader in scope such as: ‘Was your equipment well suited to the requirements of the ticket? Is there a piece of equipment you feel you should have had?’ If the Travellers reported a spectacular success somewhere or if there are hints something went wrong, the questioning should be focussed on these events.

Each Traveller can answer only one Tough Question unless there are insufficient Travellers to answer all questions. The unit commander will usually be able to choose who answers unless it is specifically directed at someone. The Traveller answering a Tough Question must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check with a bonus or penalty based on the Referee's appraisal of their answer. At the Referee's discretion Admin, Diplomat or Persuade can be used instead of Leadership, depending on the officer’s position in the unit and their presentation style.

At the end of the debriefing the unit commander will make their summary comments, abstracted as an Average (8+) Leadership check (this one must be done with the Leadership skill). The total Effect of these four checks is added to the TSI to determine the client’s reaction to the mission, as indicated on the Ticket Outcome table.

A simple ticket with only Routine criteria can produce a maximum result of 10, perhaps increased somewhat by a good performance at the end-of-ticket debriefing. This is entirely reasonable; a unit that successfully completes simple jobs will not impress anyone but might gain a reputation for underperforming even on an easy task if they somehow manage to fail the objectives. It is only when mercenaries face a real challenge that their true worth is demonstrated.

Example

The Travellers’ unit is hired on a striker ticket by a corporation whose local interests are threatened by an insurgency. The planetary government has promised to protect corporate assets but has thus far failed to do so and the corporation has decided to take matters into its own hands. The mercenaries will be provided with as much support as the corporation can manage. They will be operating out of its manufacturing plant, which is not ideal but does allow use of the company’s extensive logistics network. Supplies should not be a problem unless detachments are operating in the wilderness for an extended period.

The corporation wants its mercenaries to break the power of the insurgency, which means destroying some of its combat assets, making its regional stronghold untenable and ideally capturing some of the leaders. It also wants to send a clear but deniable message to the planetary government that it will not tolerate the current policy of promising protection then assigning forces elsewhere but has chosen not to state this in the contract. The contract does include the following terms:

1. The mercenary force will operate aggressively against the insurgents whenever targets are identified. The unit’s leaders will use their discretion when selecting targets and planning operations, subject to an overall goal of crippling the insurgency such that it is no longer a threat to the corporation’s holdings.
2. The insurgent threat is to be reduced to a suitably low level within 90 days of commencing operations.
3. The mercenary force will provide security and protection for the corporation’s assets when not engaged in offensive operations.
4. The mercenary force will not concern itself with protecting government assets or assisting government forces in other regions. Its remit is to eliminate the threat to the corporation’s holdings and nothing more.

The actual ticket success criteria are for the most part implied by the contract. The Referee knows the insurgents will attack the manufacturing plant at some point and although it is not explicitly stated in the contract, protecting it is sufficiently necessary to success that the Referee considers this a Critical objective. The mercenaries should be able to figure that out for themselves – they have been hired to eliminate a threat to the manufacturing plant, so allowing it to be destroyed is obviously undesirable.

Ticket success criteria are rated by the Referee as follows:

1. Protect the manufacturing plant when it is attacked. (Secret, Critical)
2. Reduce insurgent activity in the region to a low level. (Important)
3. Destroy a significant amount of equipment and heavy weapons belonging to the insurgents and/or capture or kill senior personnel within the insurgency. (Routine)
4. Drive the insurgents from their regional base and ensure they stay away. (Routine)
5. Government policy towards the corporation must change, ensuring future protection and support. (Secret, Routine)

Once deployed the mercenaries find that government support is almost completely lacking. They have to gather their own intelligence or rely on what little the corporation has been able to wrangle out of government officials. Their annoyance at the lack of cooperation gradually turns to suspicion that they want the corporation to abandon its holdings. Despite this the mercenaries never really figure out that their client was hoping they would do something to change the government attitude. There is no real shift in policy and the client considers this objective failed. This is unfair, since the mercenaries did not know about it but some clients are like that. Failure on a Routine objective is worth –2 to the TSI.

The early part of the ticket is mostly aggressive patrols and sweeps of areas where insurgents are known to operate. This allows the mercenaries to gather intelligence, conduct first-hand reconnaissance and get a feel for how the enemy operates. Contacts are generally fleeting and inconclusive during this phase. Although neither side takes heavy casualties the mercenaries come off best in their encounters even when outnumbered.

It might be possible to wear down the insurgents by attrition but the client wants a result within 90 days and will not pay for over-cautious mercenaries to faff about. The mercenaries build a picture of where the insurgents are likely to be based and launch a series of strikes against their minor holdings. This allows a few senior personnel to be snatched, greatly increasing the intelligence available to the mercenaries and permitting a detailed plan for an assault on the main base to be created.

When they are ready the mercenaries launch their strike, destroying vehicles and a couple of artillery pieces as well as stockpiles of supplies and ammunition. More significantly, the insurgent leadership is made to look ineffectual, with the possibility of the force disintegrating into minor factions. The Referee decides this is an excellent trigger for an attack on the manufacturing plant. The insurgent leaders have decided to stake their reputation on this assault and plan carefully. The mercenaries, unfortunately for them, were complacent and used to taking the initiative. Having failed to spot the insurgent preparations they are caught by surprise and have to fight hard. As a result the plant is damaged although the assault is driven off with heavy casualties. This triggers mass desertions and a few days later the mercenaries descend on the small force remaining loyal to the leaders and wipe it out.

In addition to –2 for the failed secret objective the Referee rates the TSI score as follows.

Protect the manufacturing plant when it is attacked: The mercenaries did not know this was an objective, and nor did the client, but it is Critical to the success of the ticket all the same. It is also rather obvious that they corporation's holdings must survive. In the event, the plant suffered some damage and the client is disappointed that the mercenaries did not see the attack coming. The Referee decides the client views this as Partial Success worth +2 TSI.

Reduce insurgent activity in the region to a low level: This is the main focus of the ticket and is considered Important by the client. Given the insurgency has collapsed and its leaders have been eliminated, the mercenaries are considered to have achieved a complete success worth +3 TSI.

Destroy equipment and/or eliminate senior personnel: This has obviously been achieved. As a Routine objective it is worth +2 TSI.

Drive the insurgents from their base: Again, this Routine objective has been a complete success worth +2 TSI.

The total comes to only 7 TSI, partly due to failure to alter governmental attitude to the situation. The mercenaries are surprised at their client's lack of enthusiasm but the reason that damage to the manufacturing plant was serious enough to displease the client. They have a chance to increase their total at the debrief stage, which in this case the Referee decides is a combination of hard questions posed by the client and an interview for local media given by the mercenary unit's senior officers. The unit comes out of it well, successfully presenting the most positive interpretation of their actions and gaining +3 TSI from the Effect of their skill checks during the debrief. This is sufficient to bring the TSI total up to 10. The client is forced to act like they are satisfied with the mercenaries' performance despite them not getting everything they wanted.

CHAPTER-SIX

FORCE CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

A Force Capability Assessment, or FCA, is necessary for all units the mercenaries will face as well as their own force. FCA produces values from 0–15 in key areas: Combat, Bombardment, Aerospace and Support. These 'CBAS' values create DMs in the same manner as a Traveller's characteristics. In addition a unit's Force Capabilities include its mobility type and the size of the formation.

All four CBAS values are relative to the unit's size. A platoon with Combat 15 is still a platoon and might be in trouble if it comes up against a battalion-sized unit. However, with enough technological advantages a highly effective small unit can defeat a less effective large one. The gods of war are on the side of the big battalions, however.

CBAS values can be determined by building a unit from scratch using the rules in *Book 2*. This is not desirable for opposing formations however. Instead values are assigned by the Referee to reflect the effectiveness of the force.

FORCE SIZE

The size of a unit is determined by its manning level. This will already be known, or will be set by the Referee.

1. Section
2. Platoon
3. Company
4. Battalion
5. Brigade
6. Division
7. Corps
8. Army

Normally units will engage in combat with an equivalently sized force but occasionally a situation arises where there is serious mismatch, such as when an infantry squad is surrounded by a whole company of hostiles. It is difficult for very much larger formations to bring their full force to bear on a much smaller one, so a hugely mismatched combat will normally be a series of engagements with sub-units. The same applies when a highly advanced

small unit tears through a much larger one; six soldiers in battle dress can quite probably defeat a whole TL1 army but not all at once. If, for some reason, the army did not scatter the engagement could be modelled as either a series of extremely short clashes between the battle dress squad and an endless series of company-sized units or as a single encounter over a much longer time frame.

Size classes are used rather than precise personnel numbers for simplicity. Each size class disparity imposes a DM-4 or +4 on the resolution of the combat. This represents diminishing returns – a squad of four soldiers is as overmatched by a section of eight to the same degree as a company facing a battalion, because the larger force cannot bring its full weight of fire to bear at once.

FORCE TYPE

The general type of the unit is indicated by one of its CBAS characteristics. A force intended for direct combat would be denoted as a Combat unit and will emphasise that characteristic; an aerospace defence unit will emphasise Aerospace and so on. Any positive DM supplied by the emphasised characteristic is tripled; negative DMs are unaffected. In some cases a multirole unit may be created, such as a combined aerospace defence/artillery formation with roughly equal capabilities in both areas. In this case any positive DM from either Bombardment or Aerospace characteristics will be doubled.

FORCE TECH LEVEL

The Tech Level of a force reflects its general level of equipment, including vehicles, weapons, communications equipment, boots, mess kits and body armour. Everything contributes to effectiveness one way or another, so a force with TL12 small arms but other equipment obtained on a TL4 world will not fight as well as one fully equipped at TL12. Small variations are permissible but the Referee should rate the unit's TL according to its overall technological sophistication. This can mean taking an average; a force might have a lot of TL9 gear plus TL11 weapons and be rated as a TL10 force despite there being not a single piece of TL10 equipment in the force. Force TL is an indicator of capabilities rather than a strict guide to exactly what equipment is present. Force TL provides a DM in the same way as the CBAS characteristics.

INTERSTELLAR TRANSPORTATION

The simplest way to deal with interstellar transportation costs is to assume the client deals with the arrangements and pays for transportation of the force. If the Travellers prefer, they can use the system presented here to determine the cost of transporting their force. A client will still cover the expected cost of transportation, but sometimes a mercenary unit loses money due to unexpected additional costs or bad accounting. It is also possible to make extra cash by finding a way to transport the unit more cheaply than the client expects, but nobody is willing to pay out huge sums without checking where the money went. Flimsy gambits like getting the client to pay for passage in barracks then shipping the unit in low berths will be discovered, and represent an attempt to defraud the client.

Mercenaries must be paid their salaries whilst they are being transported, including time spent in low berths. Likewise, equipment and vehicles must be maintained. These costs are met by the mercenary unit, which will normally pass them on to the client as part of their fee. Transportation is normally provided by commercial freighters, though specialist mercenary transports do exist. There are even a few mobile bases available for hire, though these are considered to be starmerc units in their own right. The very richest (and most expensive to hire) mercenaries may have their own starship-carried training, repair and maintenance facilities, enabling them to refit a unit whilst en route to the next ticket.

TRANSPORTING TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT

When calculating the amount of space or facilities required to transport a mercenary unit, it is simplest to generalise. If the Travellers really want, they can work out the space required for every single vehicle and piece of equipment, but the following rules of thumb may be applied unless they are obviously inappropriate. For example, a unit that defines itself as a tank platoon but uses gigantic super-tanks will obviously need to calculate the space required for individual vehicles rather than using the standard assumptions for typical grav tanks. The spaces required for shipping are calculated when a vehicle is designed using the *Vehicles Handbook*.

Personnel and equipment can be carried in one of three states:

Cold: Personnel are frozen in cryoberths and equipment is dismantled to fit into available space, reducing shipping space requirements by 25%. A unit travelling 'cold' requires a working-up period of several days before it will be fully combat ready.

Barracks: Personnel are carried in suitable accommodation – typically a barracks block within a starship, with senior personnel in standard cabins – but has only basic facilities for training and skills maintenance. It is not possible to conduct more than the most basic repairs, and personnel are unable to do more than try to maintain skills and fitness. A unit can deploy straight from barracks but will require an orientation period before becoming fully combat ready.

Alert: Personnel and equipment are carried in a ready-to-fight condition and some training is conducted. This does not require any more living space than travelling in barracks, but at least one ton of common area, training facilities or unused cargo hold is required for every soldier, and stored equipment requires 25% more space. This applies to military hardware and vehicles; most civilian vehicles can be stowed 'as is' and used straight off the loading ramp.

It is possible to carry part of a force in one condition and part in another. An inventive mercenary unit might find ways to get some training in, even if it is just physical fitness, using odd corners of the ship. The crew of a freighter might weary of having a hundred mercenaries pounding out laps of the cargo bay, but at least it keeps them occupied. Likewise, impromptu weapons maintenance in the galley hall may be annoying, but the troops will be ready if the ship faces a boarding or the unit has to go into action unexpectedly.

The weaponry and equipment, plus supplies, clothing and personal effects, associated with each soldier takes up 0.1 tons of cargo space if carried in stowage. Additional command-associated paraphernalia is assumed to be carried using space 'borrowed' from this allocation. Larger units have more of this, but they also have more troopers so the lost space is shared out more or less equally. This space requirement is for personal weapons and small arms; it includes the submachineguns used for self-defence by an artillery crew, but not their artillery.

To be readily available, an individual's weaponry, personal armour and the like must be carried in an armoury. This can be a ship's armoury or that of the unit, which in turn is carried in cargo space. An ersatz armoury can be set up in cargo space by suitably skilled personnel, but is not very secure. Normally one ton of armoury space can fully support 5 marines, but improvised facilities can support ten soldiers – in a very basic manner – per ton. This is little more than an issue point with ammunition stowage, and does not allow much in the way of maintenance. Even cleaning of weapons requires they be taken somewhere else, which can pose a security problem. However, a unit that devotes this absolute minimum of space to keeping weapons ready does not have to break them out of stowage if trouble erupts. Not all transport captains will consent to having mercenaries with live weapons traipsing about their ship, of course, and the armoury requirement is in addition to the 0.1 tons of stowage required just to carry each soldier's kit.

The examples presented on the Space Required table are estimates based upon typical formations with average equipment – medium tanks and medium-calibre artillery, around 35 personnel an infantry platoon, and so forth. Individual vehicles do not include crew requirements, but larger formations do. Provision is included for ready ammunition, a few days' supplies and the additional equipment that increasingly large formations require. Transport requirements include working and training space for alert units.

For simplicity, most forces that are primarily infantry, with some supporting equipment including a few armoured vehicles, can be considered lift infantry. If the Travellers' organisational structure varies considerably from these norms it is always possible to calculate the precise requirement from individual personnel and equipment shipping requirements.

Transportation costs assume the mercenaries are aboard a vessel with sufficient barracks or low berth accommodation to transport personnel, and adequate cargo space for equipment, and are given for a 1-parsec transit. Costs for greater distances are given on page 207 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. These costs can be used for simplicity, though in practice mercenary units do not pay for transportation the same way as individual Travellers. It is likely that officers and senior personnel will travel in standard cabins if available, and that a deal for the whole transport operation will be made at a lower cost than if a ship were to fill its cabins in the usual manner.

Costs can thus vary from those given here. It may be possible to charter a ship or come to an arrangement, especially for large contracts. Mercenary units may possess their own transportation-accommodation units, which can be loaded into a starship's cargo bay. Whilst not as space-efficient as built-in barracks, these self-contained units allow a mercenary force to be transported at freight rates and, if locked for transit, can be reassuring to shipping contractors who do not want a large body of armed people roaming the corridors of their vessel.

Typically a mercenary formation will be able to obtain a discount of 5% per point of Effect on an Average (8+) Persuade or Diplomat check, with DM+1 for platoon-sized units, DM+2 for company-sized units and DM+4 for battalion-sized or larger formations. The cost of shipping can be split across multiple vessels if necessary, which makes for tortuous negotiations – but that is why mercenary units employ lawyers and brokers as well as soldiers!

Space Required

Individual Items

Item	Minimum Facilities Required	Total Tonnage	Cost
Individual Soldier (Cold)	1 low berth, 0.1 tons of cargo space	1.1	Cr800
Individual Soldier (Barracks)	2 tons of barracks, 0.1 tons of cargo space	2.1	Cr2300
Individual Soldier (Alert)	2 tons of barracks, 0.1 tons of cargo space, 0.1 tons of improvised armoury space, 1 ton of general space	3.2	Cr2500
Towed Medium Artillery Weapon (Cold)	0.75 tons of cargo space	0.75	Cr750
Towed Medium Artillery Weapon (Barracks)	1 ton of cargo space	1	Cr1000
Towed Medium Artillery Weapon (Alert)	1.25 tons of cargo space	1.25	Cr1250
Light Armoured Vehicle (Cold)	4.5 tons of cargo space	4.5	Cr4500
Light Armoured Vehicle (Barracks)	6 tons of cargo space	6	Cr6000
Light Armoured Vehicle (Alert)	7.5 tons of cargo space	7.5	Cr7500
Grav APC (Cold)	11.25 tons of cargo space	11.25	Cr11250
Grav APC (Barracks)	15 tons of cargo space	15	Cr15000
Grav APC (Alert)	18.75 tons of cargo space	18.75	Cr18750
Grav Tank (Cold)	25.5 tons of cargo space	25.5	Cr25500
Grav Tank (Barracks)	34 tons of cargo space	34	Cr34000
Grav Tank (Alert)	42.5 tons of cargo space	42.5	Cr42500

Formations and Units

Item	Minimum Facilities Required	Total Tonnage	Cost
Infantry Platoon (Cold)	35 low berths, 3.5 tons of cargo space	21	Cr28000
Infantry Platoon (Barracks)	70 tons of barracks, 3.5 tons of cargo space	73.5	Cr80500
Infantry Platoon (Alert)	70 tons of barracks, 42 tons of cargo space	112	Cr119000
Artillery or Aerospace Defence Platoon (Cold)	12 tons of cargo space, 20 low berths	22	Cr34000
Artillery or Aerospace Defence Platoon (Barracks)	15 tons of cargo space, 40 tons of barracks	45	Cr59000
Artillery or Aerospace Defence Platoon (Alert)	40 tons of cargo space, 40 tons of barracks	80	Cr84000
Lift Infantry Platoon (Cold)	50 tons of cargo space, 24 low berths	62	Cr66800
Lift Infantry Platoon (Barracks)	65 tons of cargo space, 48 tons of barracks	113	Cr117800
Lift Infantry Platoon (Alert)	106 tons of cargo space, 48 tons of barracks	154	Cr211600
Armour Platoon (Cold)	110 tons of cargo space, 16 low berths	118	Cr121200
Armour Platoon (Barracks)	145 tons of cargo space, 32 tons of barracks	177	Cr180200
Armour Platoon (Alert)	198 tons of cargo space, 32 tons of barracks	230	Cr233200
Infantry Company (Cold)	15 tons of cargo space, 140 low berths	85	Cr113000
Infantry Company (Barracks)	15 tons of cargo space, 280 tons of barracks	295	Cr323000
Infantry Company (Alert)	170 tons of cargo space, 280 tons of barracks	450	Cr500000
Combined-Arms or Support Company (Cold)	75 tons of cargo space, 80 low berths	115	Cr131000
Combined-Arms or Support Company (Barracks)	100 tons of cargo space, 160 tons of barracks	260	Cr276000
Combined-Arms or Support Company (Alert)	205 tons of cargo space, 160 tons of barracks	365	Cr381000
Lift Infantry Company (Cold)	220 tons of cargo space, 128 low berths	328	Cr501600
Lift Infantry Company (Barracks)	270 tons of cargo space, 256 tons of barracks	526	Cr551600
Lift Infantry Company (Alert)	493 tons of cargo space, 256 tons of barracks	749	Cr774600

Shipping Larger Formations

Larger formations can be extrapolated from the figures given above, by using an approximation to the various unit types. For example, a battalion-sized force might be made up of two lift infantry companies, a headquarters with infantry, artillery, aerospace and some assorted support units, and a composite armoured/lift infantry company with two tank platoons and two lift infantry platoons. The two lift infantry companies cost Cr551600 to move in barracks mode, and the HQ company can be considered equivalent to a combined-arms company at Cr381000. The composite company could be considered to be the same or costed as its components – two lift infantry platoons at Cr117800 and two armoured platoons at Cr180200. Total cost to move the unit one parsec is MCr2.0802.

If the Travellers prefer (or the referee requires it) they can work this out down to the last infantry soldier and artillery piece, and decide what level of passage they want to pay for their officers to enjoy. Ballpark figures are sufficient when the client is paying, but if the Travellers are using the system to make extra Credits through loose accounting they should be required to work out the details.

DEPLOYING AND WORKING UP

Once a unit arrives at its destination, or realises combat is imminent if intercepted en route, it can begin preparing for combat operations. A unit moves through stages of readiness as it prepares for action, some of which impose a command operations penalty. This becomes more serious with larger formations – individuals will do their best and may make very good decisions but the force as a whole will be sluggish and uncoordinated until it is ready to fight.

Stood Down: The force is on a peacetime footing, with much of its equipment in long-term stowage. Small arms and personal equipment like body armour will be available to at least part of the force, and security measures will be in place, if perhaps complacent. Command penalty is -6.

Unready: The force has its equipment uncrated and in working condition but ammunition will not be aboard vehicles, power plants may not be charged up, and so forth. Personal weapons will be ready in the armoury or issued to security details, but bulk ammuntion is still in crates rather than loaded into magazines ready to use. Command penalty is -4.

Marginal Readiness: The force has its equipment more or less ready for use, though some is down for maintenance. Most sub-units are combat-ready, though there may be command and control issues that have not yet been remedied. Command penalty is -2.

Full Readiness: The force is ready to go, with immediate-use and short-term stores ready to be broken out or quickly transported to wherever they are needed. Organisation and internal communications are as good as they are going to be. The force might not look like much on the parade ground but is ready for action and should perform to expectations. Command penalty is +0.

Exceptional Readiness: This status is rare and hard to achieve, even for well-trained units. It is only possible when the force has had a chance to prepare for a specific action or operation, rehearsing tactics and carrying exactly the right weapons mix. One example is where a unit has been training to board and storm a particular type of vessel; everyone knows what they are to do, how and when, and have the weapons mix for their role. A large-scale set-piece battle might be pre-planned in detail to obtain this level of readiness, which will hopefully last through the early stages of engagement. Sooner or later, however, reality will deviate from the plan and the mercenaries will have to fall back on standard tactics or ability to improvise.

In order to improve the unit's state of readiness, it is necessary to undertake a period of reorganisation and equipment deployment. This can take a long time for larger units, but it is possible to split off a part of the main force to be readied as quickly as possible. This is a common gambit for large units, which will have security detachments ready as soon as possible to cover the deployment of heavy equipment.

The length of time required to ready a force depends on its size. At the beginning of the attempt, the Traveller in charge of organising and deploying the force must make an Admin check at the difficulty shown on the Deployment table. Failure increases the time required by 20% per point of Effect, after which the unit ascends to the next level of readiness. Only on an Effect of -6 or worse does the unit remain at its current level of readiness. In this case the time taken to achieve nothing is not modified, but another attempt must be undertaken. A successful check reduces the time required by 10% per point of Effect, to a maximum of 50%. If the unit must pass through several stages of readiness, it may begin the next set of preparations immediately. The best result that can be achieved is full readiness.

Exceptional Readiness can only be achieved by special measures. The Travellers must outline how they are going about preparing for the operation, indicating plausible measures and undertaking supporting actions. For example, if the Travellers are planning to assault an aerospace defence fortress they might launch an intelligence-gathering mission and set up strikes using data gathered. Measures might include planning a precision strike to take out a critical sensor array, use of a neglected approach path or a tailored weapon mix to deal with troops and security robots known to be at the base. Once the plan is outlined, a Tactics check is made at the difficulty level shown on the Deployment table. The referee may apply DMs based on the quality of intelligence available or amount of effort the Travellers put into their plan. Success with Effect 6+ indicates Exceptional Readiness has been achieved. It is much easier to do this with a small force than a large one, though occasionally an entire division might be brought up to the necessary standard.

Deployment

Force Size	Time Required	Difficulty of Check
Section	2Dx5 minutes	Easy (4+)
Platoon	2Dx10 minutes	Routine (6+)
Company	2Dx30 minutes	Average (8+)
Battalion	2D hours	Difficult (10+)
Brigade	2Dx5 hours	Very Difficult (12+)
Division	2D days	Formidable (14+)

Command Penalties

Command penalties do not affect the function of individual soldiers - at least, not directly. A unit subject to a command penalty might get into trouble which will in turn affect individuals at the sharp end, but their ability to fire weapons or operate equipment will not be affected. What a command penalty does is impede the functioning of the unit as a while. A command penalty is factored in when making an ECEI or CEI check to resolve an operation – a low state of readiness can be crippling. The penalty also applies when the Travellers need something from the unit as a whole.

For example, the Travellers' unit is subject to DM-2 from a command penalty, having been caught deploying critical equipment and with some elements of the unit out of place. The Travellers fight back using their normal skill levels, but if they call for artillery support DM-2 applies. It may be that communications have not been properly established or weapons are still in shipping crates. Ammunition might even now be landing at a starport 30km from the support batteries. This is the price larger units pay for lack of organisation, and one reason why they have security detachments to protect them whilst the unit shakes itself into fighting order.

Force Mobility

The mobility of a force is not always critical to a the outcome of a battle but there are few situations where it makes no difference at all. Even when there is no opportunity to make a clever flanking movement or deep penetration raid, the ability to move reserves quickly and safely can allow overwhelming force to be applied at the critical point. Mobility is important primarily in that it dictates which tactics are not available and enables a rapid retreat from a bad situation.

ARMED
CAUTION
MKN

Force mobility is rated according to general categories, representing the ability to overcome terrain obstacles and move fast when necessary. To qualify for a given level of mobility, a force must be fully capable of that style of movement. However, ‘partial’ levels are noted as they improve tactical mobility for at least part of the force. Mobility DMs are used mainly when attempting to break off an engagement or pursue a defeated enemy, although they do have some other applications.

Static

Some assets are static, such as emplaced heavy weapons. They cannot be moved and would likely be abandoned if the force retreats. If a force tries to move a static asset under combat conditions DM-12 applies to all checks to break off or pursue. It is possible to dismantle large assets and transport them but this requires considerable time and often specialist equipment.

Semi-Mobile

Semi-mobile assets can be moved but slowly and with great effort. They often require lengthy setup after moving and preparation beforehand. Semi-mobile assets include low- to mid-tech railway guns and similar huge weapons, along with aerospace missile batteries that must be carefully stowed before relocating. Semi-mobile mobility imposes DM-6 on checks to move under combat conditions.

Infantry

Infantry is the default level of mobility for ground troops. Even those carried to the combat area by train or maritime ship are still only foot-mobile once in contact with the enemy and would need to undertake a lengthy re-embarkation to retreat from the area. Infantry mobility inflicts DM-3. ‘Partial’ Infantry mobility is not possible.

Mechanised

Mechanised troops make use of tracked ground vehicles or heavy wheeled equivalents. Tactical mobility is good even in the most difficult terrain but long-range movement is slower than for wheeled vehicles. To qualify as mechanised a force must have sufficient vehicles of any type to carry all its personnel – which may mean some of them riding on the engine decks of tanks – and must have some heavy cross-country or tracked vehicles. In terms of the vehicle design system this means any vehicle that has the ATV trait counts as mechanised. Mechanised forces can cross difficult obstacles but their ability to move long distances at speed is limited. A mechanised force can be outrun in the open by many opponents but may catch them once they reach difficult terrain. Mechanised mobility imposes no DM on the force, but a partially Mechanised force is subject to DM-2.

Mounted

Mounted troops are made more mobile by the use of riding animals or have equivalent mobility. A force that used chariots pulled by horses or which rode in farm carts, would be considered mounted-mobile, as would a race of quadrupeds whose ‘footsoldiers’ more closely resemble the cavalry used by other races. To qualify as Mounted a force must have sufficient transport for all members but a unit that has enough mounts for to 50% of its personnel can qualify as ‘partially mounted’ if this is relevant. Mounted mobility grants DM+2 on Mobility checks in most terrain, whilst partially mounted forces are subject to DM-2. This is still quicker than Infantry in most terrain.

Motorised

Motorised forces are faster on roads and relatively easy terrain than mechanised units but lack the heavy terrain-crossing capabilities of tracked vehicles. Motorised forces are more common than mechanised ones, other than on mid-tech worlds where the likely opponents are other states of similar Tech Level. Motorised troops do not necessarily use wheeled vehicles. Hovercraft and light boats might also be used in some terrain. Motorised forces gain DM+4 on Mobility checks, with partially Motorised forces using DM+0.

Air-Mobile

Air-Mobile forces make use of non-grav air transport, which usually means helicopters or aerodynes. Air-mobile forces can move fast but do require a suitable place to land unless troops are dropped by parachute or other means. If so, the unit is considered Infantry-mobile once in place. Air-mobile forces are not common once grav vehicles are available. Air-mobile forces gain DM+6 on Mobility checks in terrain where they can operate at all, with partially Air-mobile units granting DM+2. Many air-mobile forces are reduced to operating as infantry once deployed.

Grav-Mobile

Grav-mobile forces make use of grav vehicles or personal transport devices, enabling them to operate freely in three dimensions as well as largely ignoring terrain obstacles. To count as Grav-mobile a unit must have enough transport assets for the entire force, although partially grav-mobile forces offer some tactical advantages. Grav-mobile forces gain DM+8 on Mobility checks or DM+4 for partially Grav-mobile units.

Aerospace

Aerospace units include conventional and grav-assisted vehicles and in general, fight above the battlefield rather than on it. Mercenary aerospace units are rare but many forces favour mid-tech support or reconnaissance platforms for their cheapness. Aerospace forces are a special case regarding mobility. They cannot be caught by ground forces under most circumstances and can automatically break off from them or remain in contact during a pursuit situation. In the care where a ground unit is being chased by aircraft the Aerospace unit is usually treated as having DM+12 on any Mobility checks but may have to abandon pursuit due to fuel concerns or might lose contact if the ground force enters cluttered terrain.

Mobility Checks

In situations where mobility is a factor, a Mobility check may be necessary. This is usually an Average (8+) check using each force's Mobility DM and either ECEI or the Tactics skill of the commander, with the enemy's DMs counting against the Travellers. The outcome of this check indicates which side dictates the nature of the engagement and can have other effects besides.

For example, a grav-mobile mercenary force with ECEI DM+2 encounters a partially mounted local force with ECEI DM+1. The Travellers have a total DM+10 (+8 for Grav-mobile and +2 for ECEI) and the locals have DM-1 (+1 for ECEI and –2 for being partially Mounted). Subtracting the locals' negative DM gives the Travellers a total DM+11, making the outcome a foregone conclusion. No matter what the local horsemen try they will be easily outmanoeuvred by the Travellers' grav APCs and tanks. The Travellers are therefore in control of the battle and can decide whether to break off or pursue as they see fit.

Mixed Mobility

A unit that has a mix of transport is normally rated at the lower one but at the Referee's discretion a more suitable designation may be used. For example, a case could be made for a unit to count as Mechanised if some of its personnel ride animals rather than being conveyed in vehicles, providing the main mobility type is Mechanised. 'Partial' designations can be used where the unit has a significant proportion of that mobility type. Thus a Motorised force, which contains a number of light grav vehicles suitable for tactical movements might be designated Motorised/Partial Grav-mobile. This indicates at a glance what capabilities are available to the force.

CBAS CHARACTERISTICS

A unit's four CBAS characteristics are used, along with Tech Level, to provide a DM when resolving combat or combat-related actions. A unit with a CBAS score of 0 in a field has no significant capability in that area. A unit with Aerospace 0 has no weapons capable of significantly harming a high-flying bomber. Personnel can fire their rifles at it if they think it will make them feel better but they have no chance of harming it. The Referee should not be talked into allowing a chance for a 'lucky hit' in an obviously impossible situation. However, if an aerospace asset came close enough that it might be considered to be in the unit's normal combat environment, they might be permitted to use their Combat characteristic.

Default and starting values for CBAS characteristics are detailed on the following page, along with modifiers.

Combat

The Combat characteristic is a rating of the force's direct combat capability. This includes everything from direct-fire support weapons to bayonets. It is used to assess the force's effectiveness in relatively short-range combat. Units that are intended to (or at least equipped for) directly engage the enemy will always have a Combat characteristic above 0. Even if they are reduced to throwing soup cans and punching their enemies in the face, units can usually find a way to inflict some damage.

The Combat characteristic is used to resolve direct combat between opposing forces at line-of-sight range. This includes primitive missile weapons such as longbows and infantry support weapons such as mortars. In some cases the Combat characteristic might be used when a unit engages a flying target, such as if a mercenary unit is attacked by primitive biplanes or an assault force travelling on air/rafts. These are short-range engagements and considered combat rather than aerospace defence or bombardment.

Bombardment

The Bombardment characteristic is a rating of a force's ability to deliver standoff weapons ranging from artillery to missiles. It is used when a force is beyond direct-fire range. Some weapons appear to fall somewhere between Bombardment and Combat, such as primitive black-powder cannon. However, since these weapons have a shorter range than a TL7 rifle and generally engage in line-of-sight attacks they are considered Combat assets. Larger cannon with a longer range and an indirect trajectory would be considered to be Bombardment weapons.

Many units have no standoff bombardment capability at all and so have Bombardment 0. This includes infantry equipped with short-range missiles and mortars, as these are short-range battlefield support weapons rather than true artillery. Bombardment weapons include unguided rockets, guided missiles, traditional artillery and weapons such as meson guns – essentially any weapon intended for standoff bombardment.

The Bombardment characteristic is normally used offensively, ideally to harm enemy formations without attracting return fire. However, bombardment units usually have techniques and defences intended to defeat likely attacks. An artillery unit that comes under counter-battery fire can use its Bombardment characteristic DM defensively. The same applies if the unit is attacked from short-range by aircraft or grav vehicles or by missiles. It is common for artillery units to have some air defence capability as well as decoys and other defensive systems. However, this can only be done in self-defence. An artillery unit may be equipped to shoot down an incoming missile but it is not capable of engaging the aircraft that launched it from high altitude, nor can it protect the infantry unit nearby. This is a similar situation to a direct-combat unit engaging low-flying aircraft that have ventured into its sphere of capabilities. An artillery unit directly attacked by ground forces must use it Combat characteristic.

Aerospace

The Aerospace characteristic is a rating of a force's ability to inflict damage upon flying or orbital craft. It is used when a unit engages or is attacked by aircraft, missiles or space vessels and may be applied instead of Combat when dealing with grav tanks and similar platforms. For non-specialist aerospace units the characteristic represents their ability to defend against airborne threats. For specialist units – both ground-based and flying – it represents the ability to bring the enemy to action or target their assets in flight.

Many units have no real aerospace defence capabilities beyond small arms and light support weapons, and have Aerospace 0. Few non-specialist units have a high rating; small formations normally have nothing more than a few short-range shoulder-fired rockets. Whilst larger units will usually see the need to provide for air defence, money spent on specialist vehicles comes from the budget for the unit's main field of activity and will always be a secondary consideration.

Support

The Support characteristic is a general rating of a unit's force-multipliers. This might include electronic warfare capability, advanced sensors, its command and control network and any other sources of advantage in the combat environment. Some units have virtually no capability in this area and have a rating of 0 but most will have some support systems even if it is just basic communications equipment.

The Support characteristic is used by specialist units when they carry out their function such as communications intercept or emergency battlefield medicine and also when a formation does anything not covered by the other three CBAS characteristics. When a specialist unit is carrying out its primary function it gains the usual tripling of its DM but when doing anything else the DM is as normal. Thus if a medical unit was helping casualties it would use its tripled Support value but if asked to improvise a communications net the DM would not be tripled.

VALUES AND MODIFIERS

CBAS values reflect equipment and how well it is used. A unit that has been raised and equipped to carry out its specialist function begins with a characteristic associated with the unit's function equal to half the unit's Tech Level, rounded down. Any force that has been provided with small arms for self-defence begins with a Combat characteristic equal to one-third its Tech Level, rounded down. If suitable weaponry is not provided a unit begins with Combat 1. Similarly, a unit that has been provided with basic equipment including communications gear begins with Support 1. If little or no general-purpose equipment is provided the unit begins with Support 0. Bombardment and Aerospace normally begin at 0 unless the unit specialises in that area.

Equipment

The amount and quality of equipment provided has a significant effect on the capabilities of a unit. This is independent of Tech Level, which gives bonuses elsewhere. Secondary equipment can only be provided to one level lower than the unit's primary area of expertise. Thus a direct-combat unit with Basic small arms cannot be given Lavish artillery without changing the nature of the force. Costs are not considered here; this process is for rating a unit created by the Referee as opposition or allies.

Equipment Provision

Equipment Level	Notes	CBAS Value
Minimal	The absolute minimum of equipment necessary to give a capability in the field.	If characteristic is 0, it is set to 1. Otherwise no effect.
Sparse	A small amount of equipment, or gravely substandard equipment.	Characteristic increased by +1
Basic	Cheap, low-quality or barely adequate equipment.	Characteristic increased by +2
Standard	A standard set of equipment for the task at hand.	Characteristic increased by +3
Generous	High-quality, well-integrated equipment in sufficient quantity.	Characteristic increased by +4
Lavish	More than enough equipment, of very high quality.	Characteristic increased by +5
Excessive	Excessive quantities of the very best equipment and accessories available.	Characteristic increased by +6

Basic CBAS Values

Unit Type	Combat	Bombardment	Aerospace	Support
Combat (infantry or armour)	½ Tech Level	0	0	1 (0 if minimal or no general-purpose equipment provided)
Bombardment (artillery)	1/3 Tech Level (1 if minimal personal weaponry provided)	½ Tech Level	0	1 (0 if minimal or no general-purpose equipment provided)
Aerospace (grav craft, aircraft or aerospace defence)	1/3 Tech Level (1 if minimal personal weaponry provided)	0	½ Tech Level	1 (0 if minimal or no general-purpose equipment provided)
Support (medical, logistics, electronic warfare, intelligence and other supporting functions)	1/3 Tech Level (1 if minimal personal weaponry provided)	0	0	½ Tech level

These values are modified depending on the level of training and equipment supplied.

CBAS and Individual Skills

CBAS values do not correlate directly to individual skills. A unit might have a very high Aerospace CBAS value as a result of excellent equipment and mediocre skills, for example. The unit's Company Efficiency Index (CEI) is used to indicate the skill level of personnel where this becomes relevant. See P62 for how CEI relates to individual skill levels.

Training Levels

The training level of a force is applied after its equipment level. The maximum value a CBAS characteristic can achieve is 15 with all modifiers combined.

Training Level

Description	Training Level	Primary CBAS Value	Other CBAS Values
Raw and Untrained	Barely able to do their jobs, with little unit cohesion.	–2, to a minimum of 1	–3 to all values
Raw	Extremely poorly skilled personnel.	–1, to a minimum of 1	–2
Green	Low-quality or poorly trained personnel.	–	–1
Trained	Properly trained personnel.	+1	–
Effective	Highly-trained or experienced personnel.	+2	+1
Highly Effective	Elite or veteran personnel.	+3	+2

Example

Armoured Recon Services Incorporated, or ARSI, is a small unit specialising in the armoured reconnaissance and fast strike field. It is equipped with TL11 light grav tanks and armoured personnel carriers, whilst its personnel carry TL13 small arms. The unit is designated as a Combat specialist formation and since the tanks are its main striking force their Tech Level is the one that defines the unit.

The unit's tanks and fire support weapons are standard for a force of this type. It has no artillery weapons but the vehicles have self-contained electronic warfare and communications packages, which along with the unit's other equipment is rated as Standard capability. The unit cannot increase this as it is equal to the force's rating in its specialist area. Vehicles all have light aerospace defence capabilities, in the form of short-range missile launchers and gatling lasers. This is rated as a Basic aerospace capability. The unit is well trained but not highly experienced, earning it a Trained rating.

Since this is a combat specialist unit its Combat characteristic starts at half its Tech Level, rounded down or 5. Standard equipment increases this by +3 to 8 and being a Trained unit adds another +1. The force has Combat 9, earning DM+1 on checks to resolve combat situations.

With no artillery weapons, Bombardment is 0. The unit cannot conduct any form of standoff warfare. Aerospace starts at 0 for non-specialist units and is increased by +2 for the Basic equipment fit. Trained level does not add any more. This would be a very low score for a specialist force but represents a modest self-defence capability for a unit specialising in other areas. Likewise, the unit's Support characteristic is not high. It starts at 1 and is increased by +3 for the Standard equipment fit, to a total of 4. This is not bad for a unit that does not intend to compete with specialist support formations in their own arena.

Among the unit's prospective opponents is a militia armed with civilian weapons and a few stolen military small arms. This force is considered to be Raw and Untrained, has no artillery or aerospace capability and only the most minimal of support provision. The latter has been improved from civilian communications equipment and other readily available items. The militia starts with a Combat characteristic equal to half its Tech Level of 6, modified by +1 for Sparse equipment and –2 for the complete lack of training and experience. 3+1-2= 2. The unit's Bombardment and Aerospace are 0, and Support starts at 1 for minimal equipment. This should be reduced by –3 for the unit's training status but no value can be taken below 1 since 0 represents no capability at all.

CHAPTER-SEVEN

UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

The CBAS characteristics are used to resolve combat but many situations occur out of contact with the enemy. Any activity on the part of the mercenary force can be resolved by playing it out using the standard *Traveller* rules. This could be rather time-consuming if the actions are complex and undertaken by large numbers of people, so most activities are abstracted. Abstract resolution normally uses Company Efficiency Index (CEI) or Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI) or Detachment Efficiency index (DEI) plus the Morale (MOR) of the force. Occasionally an action might be resolved in some other way, such as using the skill of the Traveller leading the action but for the most part it is the ability of the force to function as a unit that matters rather than the talents of any one individual.

COMPANY EFFICIENCY INDEX (CEI)

The Company Efficiency Index, or CEI, is used to resolve many situations that a mercenary force may encounter. It is based on an estimate of the training level and general competence of unit's personnel, modified by leadership and a number of factors arising from events during the campaign. These include incidents that will improve or reduce morale, personnel disaffection and fatigue.

CEI is rated 0–15 just like a Traveller's characteristic and can go up or down during a campaign. This can result in a force becoming more effective over time due to improved skills and confidence, or less effective as personnel become tired or demoralised. CEI produces a DM on tasks undertaken by the unit as a whole.

CEI does not usually change during a ticket. The level of competence a force has at the beginning of a ticket is what it must work with. It is possible that on a very long ticket a force might achieve a permanent increase or suffer a decrease in CEI but in game mechanics terms these factors are dealt with at the end of the ticket. Long-term but not necessarily permanent changes to a unit's effectiveness are reflected in Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI) as detailed on the following page.

Company Efficiency Index

CEI	Description	Training Level	Primary/Secondary Skill Levels	Task DM
0	Raw and Untrained	Barely able to do their jobs, with little unit cohesion	0/0	–6
1	—	—	1/0	–5
2	Raw	Extremely poorly skilled personnel	1/0	–4
3	—	—	1+0/1+0	–3
4	—	—	1+0/1+0	–2
5	Green	Low-quality or poorly trained personnel	1+0/1+0	–1
6	—	—	2+1/1+1	–1
7	Trained	Properly trained personnel	2+1/1+1	0
8	—	—	2+1/1+1	0
9	Effective	Highly-trained or experienced personnel	3+1/1+1	+1
10	—	—	3+1/1+1	+1
11	—	—	3+1/1+1	+2
12	Highly Effective	Elite or veteran personnel	3+1/2+1	+3
13	—	—	3+1/2+1	+4
14	—	—	3+1/2+1	+5
15	—	Legendary force formed from the cream of veterans and prodigies	4+2/2+2	+6

The CEI of a mercenary unit or any military force is based on its training level and overall competence. This can also be used to give an indication of the skill level of any individual member of the unit. On the Company Efficiency table, Primary skills refer to the main function of the unit member – typically this is the Gun Combat skill for most infantry units – whilst Secondary skills refer to supporting capabilities such as Stealth or Recon for combat troops. Specialist personnel will usually have a non-combat Primary skill such as Medic, Mechanic, Electronics or Admin, with their Secondary skill indicating combat competence.

Where more than one skill is listed, such as 3+1, this indicates additional skills from the same general category. For example a Trained infantry soldier is listed as 2+1 Primary and 1+1 Secondary. A typical member of the unit might be assumed to have Gun Combat 2 plus Heavy Weapons 1 as Primary skills and Recon 1 plus Stealth 1 as Secondary skills. The soldier will likely have additional skills but this is an indicator of their primary combat-related capabilities.

Rating a Force

It has been wisely stated that no combat-ready force can pass muster and vice versa. No matter how hard a unit tries there is always a learning curve at the beginning of a conflict – a curve often littered with unnecessary casualties. Only by engaging in conflict on a regular basis (which also causes casualties!) can a force retain its edge. For this reason the CEI of most military forces is lower than might be expected. The Base CEI table can be used to quickly determine the CEI of a friendly or opposing unit.

Note that a very low CEI does not necessarily translate to negligible fighting power. A mob can do a lot of damage if sufficiently riled up but will not be able to perform complex tasks and will probably dissipate upon meeting setbacks or taking casualties.

CEI 9+ is highly unusual in a 'peacetime' army no matter how much money is spent on training. A variety of mechanisms can be used to maintain a respectable level of readiness, such as seconding personnel to forces operating in troubled areas or getting involved in multi-government peacekeeping operations. Hiring out a part of the national armed forces as mercenaries is an accepted practice in some areas but may not be palatable to all governments. Whatever the means used, forces that have at least some personnel with experience of active deployments tend to be more effective than those that have been more or less at peace for some time. The typical planetary army, without time to ramp up training and prepare for conflict, would have overall CEI 5–6 at best, with some units a little above or below this level.

Base CEI

Force Type	Base CEI
Rabble or mob	0–1
Volunteer militia with little training	2–3
Low-readiness professionals or recently activated reservists, newly raised troops	4–5
Well trained professionals with some experienced personnel among them	6–7
Well trained and experienced professional soldiers, most mercenary units	8–9
Highly experienced professionals with considerable experience or long traditions of effectiveness in combat	10–11
Elite forces receiving lavish training and at least some recent experience	12–13

The CEI of a force can be used to resolve many situations either directly or in opposition against that of another entity. This might not be a combat operation; an attempt to unsnarl the supply chain would be a solo CEI check whilst a force that is trying to procure a shipment of ammunition at a good price might match its CEI against the equivalent rating for the corporation holding out for a higher bid.

Effective Company Efficiency Index (ECEI)

A force's Effective CEI (ECEI) is used to resolve situations that need to be abstracted. ECEI varies throughout the ticket according to circumstances and can be increased or decreased before beginning the ticket or any of its component missions. Permanent changes to CEI require long periods of training or considerable experience and are dealt with between tickets whereas ECEI can vary throughout one.

ECEI is determined at the beginning of a ticket and varies thereafter. Every time a unit suffers a crisis there is a chance ECEI may go down and it can be increased by various measures. A crisis can include one of the following:

- The force takes casualties equivalent to 5% of its starting personnel level.
- A serious setback such as the repulse of an assault or the loss of a key terrain feature occurs.
- A Leadership Crisis occurs (see Morale on page 68).
- The unit's commanding officer or a similarly important person is disabled or killed.

To avoid a reduction in ECEI the unit's commanding officer must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check (2Dx5 minutes, INT). If the check is unsuccessful, one point of ECEI is lost and MOR is reduced by a value equal to any negative Effect.

ECEI may be increased before a ticket or at the outset of a mission. To obtain an increase of +1 ECEI, an event that can increase ECEI must occur and the unit's commanding officer must make an Average (8+) Leadership check (2Dx5 minutes, INT). MOR is modified by the result of this check and can go down if the event is mishandled.

Events that can increase ECEI include:

- Generous supply and provisioning. This is a rare and precious thing; few units ever have all they need of something and even a 'full' supply level usually involves some shortages here and there.
- Solid success that demonstrates good practice and the reliability of personnel, such as a complex all-arms operation going off like clockwork.
- A period of well-planned training or exercises lasting at least two weeks. Note that the normal ongoing training is routine and necessary for the maintenance of ECEI. Personnel need to receive training well above and beyond this level in order to improve.
- A draft of additional or replacement personnel of high quality are received.

In addition, every 2D weeks a unit is deployed (typically this means being in the field on a ticket), there is a chance ECEI may increase or decrease. Personnel may fall into an effective working rhythm and become more efficient or might lose their focus and become less competent overall.

The unit's commanding officer must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check (INT) and apply the Effect as a DM on the ECEI Changes table to determine whether the unit remains effective.

ECEI Changes

2D + Effect	Result
0–	Morale collapses (reduce MOR by 2D, to a minimum of 0) and the force is near mutiny. ECEI –3
1–2	MOR -1D. ECEI –2
3–4	MOR -D3. ECEI –1
5–8	No change
9–11	The force gains confidence. MOR +1
12+	Efficiency and morale increase. ECEI +1, MOR +D3

Skill levels of personnel do not fall as ECEI drops, nor do they suddenly gain new capabilities. At the end of the ticket, ECEI will be compared to CEI and a check is made to see if CEI increases or decreases. In the meantime personnel have the same skill levels as previously but have become better or worse at working together as a unit.

Using ECEI

In addition to functioning as a whole-unit DM, ECEI can be used to get the force out of trouble or complete difficult tasks, representing a heroic effort. The commanding officer of the relevant sub-unit (or whole force if appropriate) must make an Average (8+) Leadership check to inspire the requisite effort. Up to three points of ECEI can be deducted in the attempt, with each point imposing DM+3 on all checks during the effort or permitting some near-impossible obstacle to be overcome.

This reduction in ECEI is permanent and represents exhaustion, depletion of resources and the sacrifice of some personnel to get a necessary job done.

Example

The Gammblin Rifles, a company-sized mercenary infantry unit, are surrounded and taking heavy fire. Their local allies have abandoned them, the grav tank is in fragments scattered all over the battlefield and ammunition is running short. Surrender would normally be the honourable option but the opposition are known for their fanaticism and tendency to murder captives.

The unit's remaining officer passes the word that she wants to make a breakout and succeeds in her Leadership check. She decides to burn three points of ECEI in the attempt, since everyone is dead if they fail. One point is spent on making a breakout possible. The Referee decides that there are some civilian vehicles nearby that could be used and there is a weak spot in the encirclement. The other two points add a net DM+6 to all checks made whilst undertaking this desperate lunge for survival.

The escape is an epic tale of heroics and sacrifice. Most of the unit smashes through to the vehicles and charges to safety, leaving behind those who could not get aboard in time or were unlucky enough to be in a vehicle that was disabled. The unit lives to fight another day but is weakened by loss of confidence in its patron's other forces and by the casualties suffered during the breakout. ECEI is reduced by –3, and there may be a permanent effect at the end of the ticket.

DETACHMENT EFFICIENCY INDEX (DEI)

The Detachment Efficiency Index is used in a similar manner to CEI, for actions involving part of the force rather than the unit as a whole. At the Referee's discretion, DEI can be calculated for each sub-unit and used instead of CEI for tasks involving that component of the force. This is not recommended for very large and complex situations as it will take significant time to resolve but where the outcome for different groups matters it is useful. For example, the force as a whole may do well but a platoon detached to guard a remote outpost might have a very different experience to the main body of the force.

Having sub-units with differing DEI can make for an interesting challenge when Travellers command them; a campaign where officers are desperately stealing resources and personnel from one another to ensure they do not face the wrath of a tyrannical unit commander or an unreasonable patron might be an interesting situation. A unit that has recently suffered heavy casualties or been plundered for its best personnel might present challenges for a new command team and rebuilding such a unit into a solid fighting force can be the focus of a campaign or part of it.

DEI is also used for any group of personnel pulled out of a force in order to carry out a specific task. A detachment will normally contain a leader (typically a sergeant or junior officer), one or more individuals with good skills applicable to the task at hand and additional personnel to provide enough hands and eyes to get the job done.

Subdividing the Unit

If the Referee wishes to determine the DEI for different parts of a formation, it is recommended that the subdivision be along the lines of formal sub-units plus any specialist components of the force.

Example

The Gammblin Rifles has come to the end of a rather traumatic ticket and is reorganising ready for its next employment. All of its constituent platoons have suffered losses and decisions had to be made about how best to rebuild with the budget and assets available.

Headquarters Detachment: The headquarters detachment contains the commanding officer and second-in-command, a handful of clerks and runners who double as security for the command team plus communications and medical personnel. The HQ also contains the newest recruits to the force, who are gaining experience and settling in. For this reason its DEI is 7 – it is well led but not cohesive.

The HQ DEI is also used for the unit's liaison officer – who also handles procurement and administration when not on deployment – and a couple of non-combatants who are rarely with the force in the field. Their usual role is sourcing new contracts and finding suppliers of equipment when the unit needs them. The activities of these distant employees can usually be abstracted with the HQ DEI.

First (Sharpshooter) Platoon: First platoon has always been the elite of the force, and has a proud tradition of getting the job done. It does not always receive the most promising personnel but its ethos and the example of its members tends to bring out the best in those assigned. Although known as a 'sharpshooter' platoon the unit is equipped like the other rifle platoons of the force with standard small arms and light support weapons. Its DEI is an impressive 10 but its experience level was maintained by only bringing in a handful of recruits. As a result the sharpshooter platoon is about 30% understrength, at 25 personnel.

Second Platoon: Second platoon is at more or less full strength, with 34 effectives, and is armed and equipped like the other rifle platoons. Its DEI is 7, reflecting the unit's solid leadership and well-trained, modestly experienced personnel. Second platoon did not take such heavy casualties as other sub-units and has not received many new recruits. The decision was made not to strip this platoon of experienced personnel to shore up the others, although the option was considered.

Third Platoon: Third Platoon is in a state of transition. Having taken serious casualties in an earlier mission the unit was brought back up to full strength with a draft of new recruits. Most are broadly competent but the unit has yet to bond properly. The mix of experienced and inexperienced personnel and a general lack of cohesion has resulted in DEI 5, although this is likely to increase as the personnel get used to working together.

Fourth (Provisional) Platoon: Fourth platoon took very heavy casualties and some members left the unit after the last mission. As a result the formation is down to 16 effectives – just under half strength – and the confidence of its members has been shaken. The platoon has not received reinforcements and has been redefined as a reserve pool. Personnel may be reassigned to bring other platoons up to strength or the unit may be rebuilt; the company commander has not decided yet. In the interim Fourth Platoon has DEI 4. Its training and experience level are much higher but its members have not yet regained their confidence and are unsure of how reliable their remaining comrades are.

Support Platoon: The support platoon used to have a mix of weapon types – a light grav tank, a self-propelled light artillery piece and various man-portable mortars, aerospace and anti-armour weapons. Most were lost, along with some of the personnel, in the recent disaster. The remaining 22 personnel have retained their man-portable weapons but both vehicles were destroyed. The support platoon has DEI 6 and there is some talk of combining it with fourth platoon to create a more or less full-strength force with more than the usual complement of heavy weapons, or perhaps sharing out the 'weapons' personnel among all other platoons and disbanding the support formation. As yet the issue is undecided but it is certain there is no money for a replacement vehicles so the support platoon will remain diminished in capability if it continues to exist at all.

Forming a Detachment

Typically, a detachment uses the best personnel who can be spared rather than the best available, unless the task is extremely critical. For example, the unit commander would not normally weaken the aerospace defence team in the middle of a fight to provide personnel for casualty evacuation. However, bad decisions are sometimes made, or there might be a reason why critical personnel have to be pulled from their posts.

When any detachment is formed, the same process is used as when determining the DEI of a department of the ship's crew unless the Referee wishes to assign a desired value.

The DEI of a detachment is based on the DEI of whatever department it is pulled out of or the unit's CEI if the detachment is put together from a mix of personnel. This value is modified by the results of the following process:

The officer forming the detachment must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check. The Effect of this check is applied to the running total modifier. In addition, the size of the detachment and the personnel pool it is formed from will affect the amount of suitably competent people available. This modifier is not used when determining the DEI of a sub-unit unless it is being formed by borrowing personnel from other sub-units.

Detachment Size

Size of Detachment	Modifier
Less than 1% of available personnel	+2
1–5% of available personnel	0
6–10% of available personnel	–2
11–20% of available personnel	–4
21–30% of available personnel	–6
31–40% of available personnel	–8
41–50% of available personnel	–10

A 'detachment' of more than 50% of the available personnel is not really a detachment at all and is subject to special rules. See Weakening or Expanding a Unit on the following page.

The Effect of the Leadership check and the modifier for detachment size are totalled, along with any of the following that apply and used as a modifier to a 2D roll on the Total DEI table.

Send the best: If the decision is made to create the most effective team possible even if this weakens the parent formation, DM+3 applies. However, see the following page for the negative effects of this.

Anyone with a pulse: If the detachment is of low importance or the unit cannot spare well-qualified people, a deliberately weak detachment might be created. If so, DM-3 modifier applies.

The base value used to calculate DEI is the DEI or ECEI of the parent body. Thus a detachment pulled out of a larger detachment uses its DEI as base whereas one formed from the unit as a whole uses its ECEI value.

Total DEI

2D	DEI
0 or less	Base –2D3
1–2	Base –1D
3–4	Base –D3
5–6	Base –1
7–8	Base +0
9–10	Base +1
11–12	Base +D3
13 or more	Base +1D

Note that it is quite difficult to create a detachment that is more competent than the parent group but it can be done. This reflects sending only the most efficient team or using the absolute best personnel and allowing them to stand out from the average competence of their crewmates.

WEAKENING OR EXPANDING A UNIT

A unit can be weakened by several circumstances. Under-manning, casualties or a need to send off detachments to carry out various tasks can leave a ship dangerously understaffed. Whenever a unit or a detachment is subject to any of the circumstances below, it is potentially weakened.

- When a detachment is formed.
- When casualties are taken in combat.
- When sufficient personnel are unavailable for their normal duties due to needs elsewhere.
- When the force or a detachment is formed from personnel who are not experienced at working together.

Whenever circumstances arise that might weaken a unit or detachment, the officer commanding it must try to avoid a reduction of capabilities by making an Average (8+) Leadership or Admin check. The Effect of this check is added to the following modifiers and a 2D roll to determine the outcome.

A unit can also be expanded by attaching additional personnel. A unit fortunate enough to have a few extra personnel will not suffer serious problems but adding large numbers of additional troops in a short time can seriously disrupt the formation. There is also the question of unit definition. An infantry company would not normally exceed 200 personnel, by might be expanded up to 50% over the average for its type – 225 in this case since an average sized company is 150 personnel – and could be organised as a reinforced company. Beyond this the unit is too big for a company command structure to cope with. A 250-strong 'company' could be split into two manageable companies of 125 personnel or so, or redefined as an extremely weak battalion with a battalion command and support structure.

Use the following modifiers when determining the effects of weakening or expanding a unit.

If an 'A-team' detachment was formed: +2
If a deliberately weak (low-skills) detachment was formed: –2
Casualty percentage or detachment size is less than 1% of parent unit: 0
Casualty percentage or detachment size is 2–4% of parent unit: –1
Casualty percentage or detachment size is 5–9% of parent unit: –2
For each additional 5% casualties or otherwise lost personnel: -1
For each 25% of the unit's current size received in new personnel: –1
If the unit or detachment is formed from personnel who have common training but little experience of working together: –2
If the unit or detachment is formed from personnel who do not have common training: –4

The unit's command team must make an Average (8+) Leadership check, adding the Effect to the result of a 2D roll on the table below and subject to the modifiers above.

Weakened or Expanded Forces

2D	Effect on DEI or ECEI
0 or less	–4
1–3	–3
4–6	–2
7–9	–1
10–12	0
13 or more	+1

It is actually possible to increase efficiency by removing some members – typically incompetents or troublemakers – but more commonly after a reshuffle of personnel the detachment or crew will be less effective than before.

Example

A mercenary company with 150 personnel is used as the basis for a battalion-sized force formed from activated reservists and new recruits. This will bring the unit's strength up to 750. The intention is that the mercenaries will guide the new arrivals' learning process and set a good example, and when the force is ready the mercenaries will detach. This will create a combat-ready battalion with a strength of 600 personnel and free the mercenaries for other operations – or perhaps to act as the cadre of a new force. However, this plan is not as good as the patron thought it might be.

Initially just 300 personnel arrive, all of them raw recruits. The mercenary force has CEI 8 at the beginning of the process and might actually be better off not having to suddenly accommodate 600 new members. All the same, the sudden expansion is a problem. The mercenary commander must roll 2D to determine the effect of the expansion, with DM-4 because the recruits do not have common training with the mercenaries – they come from a local army's conscription programme. The new arrivals are equal to 200% of the unit's current size, for an enormous DM-8. With a total DM-12 the result is a foregone conclusion. The commander rolls the dice anyway and with all factors combined gets 7 on 2D, modified to –5. The unit is now a weak battalion with 450 effectives. Its CEI drops by –4, to 4. If the mercenaries detach and operate without their mob of recruits, they can use their own company's CEI 8 but the battalion formed around them is a spectacularly incompetent one.

The recruits are not idiots; it is simply that too much has been attempted too fast. A couple of weeks later the mercenaries have dragged CEI up to 5, when the other 300 personnel arrive. This is 66% of the unit's current size, so imposes DM-2 on the check to see what disaster is brought upon the unit's CEI. The Referee decides that since these recruits are also products of the planetary conscription scheme and have received the same rather poor training as the first lot, DM-2 applies rather than DM-4. These personnel have common training but no experience of working together – or anything else for that matter. Facing DM-6 in total, the mercenary commander makes her 2D roll and gets a 10. Modified to a mere 4, this is a reduction of –2 on CEI. The battalion is now 750 strong including the mercenaries and has CEI 3. The mercenary commander recommends that it is not combat-ready yet and begins training the recruits up as best she can, whilst her troops yearn for the day when they can go back to being an independent infantry company.

Reaching and maintaining a good level of competence, as reflected by CEI, is important to success as a mercenary force. It might even be the focus of the campaign, with the Travellers inheriting a shambles and trying to build it into an effective fighting force. Such an endeavour will meet with setbacks and unnecessary casualties but warfare is an unforgiving arena for those who are unprepared. If the Travellers are diligent and perhaps inventive they will prevail. If not, then perhaps mercenary work is not for them.

Cadre Assignments

Where a unit is suddenly expanded and expected to function as a much larger formation full of people who have not worked together before, the matter is treated as in the previous example. Cadre assignments, where the mercenaries are assigned to provide training, are a different matter. In the case of a cadre assignment the mercenaries are in a position to provide structured and planned training organised as they think best,and more importantly they are providing training to the local units. A situation where they suddenly are the unit and are expected to commence operations if ordered to do so is likely to result in chaos unless the new recruits are added in small batches with suitable orientation and in-unit training.

MORALE

Morale (MOR) is a measure of the determination and psychological resilience of a force's personnel. It is relevant not only to the Travellers' unit but also to any other forces it encounters – friend or foe. The MOR of a unit or group of potential combatants is based on its CEI, modified by various factors detailed in the table below.

Starting Morale

Force Type	Starting MOR
Fully trained professional military force	CEI+1D
Recently raised or reserve military force	CEI+D3
Motivated militia or insurgent group	CEI+D3
Angry mob	CEI+1
Armed civilians	CEI+0

MOR can be modified by up to DM+/-3 – possibly even more in extreme circumstances – at the Referee's discretion. A force with a recent string of victories may have high morale, as might one that is deluded into thinking they are invulnerable by a charismatic religious leader. Depleted or dispirited units will have lower than usual morale.

MOR is rated on the same 0–15 scale as a Traveller's characteristics and creates a DM in the same way. MOR is used rather than CEI to resolve situations affecting the mood of the force.

MOR varies a lot more than ECEI during a mission. A wise commander does as much as possible to maintain the morale of the force but it will be worn down over time by setbacks and fatigue. Some events alter MOR directly, while others require a MOR check.

Morale Checks

There are two common types of MOR check and both are carried out the same way. The usual difficulty of a MOR check is Average (8+) but difficulty can be higher or lower if the situation is particularly grim or encouraging.

A Minor Morale Check imposes a loss of MOR –1 if failed. A Major Morale Check imposes a loss of MOR –1D if failed.

If not otherwise specified, a MOR check is assumed to be Minor.

Leadership Crisis

A Leadership Crisis takes places at any time MOR drops by -3 or more in the same event and when the commander of a major sub-unit or the unit's overall commander is put out of action without a clear replacement. This might occur if the ship's communications are down and orders are desperately needed even if the officers are still alive. A Leadership Crisis may cause ECEI to be reduced.

Events Affecting Morale

Morale can be affected by a number of events and circumstances, some positively but most negatively. A separate MOR check must be made for each situation that occurs.

Success

Morale thrives on success. If the unit's commander can provide the troops with a clear goal and proof it has been attained, MOR may increase by +1 or occasionally more. The goal must be something worthwhile and difficult rather than a routine operation. For example, the mercenary force is requested to carry out patrols in search of insurgent forces and has a few intermittent contacts. This is not enough to grant a MOR increase. Then an allied unit comes under heavy attack and the mercenaries respond in time to rescue their comrades. This is a noteworthy success, resulting in a chance to increase MOR. The company commander makes a Leadership check and if successful, MOR +1 is gained.

Deliberate Action

Most deliberate attempts to influence MOR are positive, such as the commander holding a parade to commemorate a victory or rewarding outstanding personnel. Rabble-rousing on the part of disaffected personnel can instead reduce MOR. Efforts of this sort normally take at least a day or two and require the use of skills such as Persuade or Leadership. For example, the commander of a mercenary unit knows there are grievances within the unit and invites a small delegation to present them to the command staff. If the commander listens and is seen to do something about the problem, they may make an Average (8+) Leadership check and if successful MOR improves by +1.

Hardship

A unit forced to suffer hardship for an extended period must make a Minor Morale check. Hardship in this case typically means poor food and lack of shelter, or being forced to operate in pestilential areas such as swamps or jungle without adequate training and protection. Enemy action is not considered hardship as such. For example, a unit is dug in on a windswept moor awaiting an attack that never comes. Food is bad and everyone is cold and wet, all the time. Every 2D days the unit makes a Minor Morale check to avoid losing one point of MOR. If left there long enough it may even mutiny or begin 'foraging' in the rear area for sources of hot food and dry blankets.

Injustice

If personnel perceive injustice, such as comrades being punished too harshly for infractions, or arbitrarily, a MOR check is required. This will normally be Minor but a major incident like the summary execution of a popular crewmember might require a Major check instead. Favouritism within the unit or on the part of a patron towards other units is also perceived as injustice. For example, the unit commander appoints a relative to a high position instead of someone the troops think has earned it. A successful MOR check indicates the unit accepts this, albeit grudgingly. Failure reduces MOR by a point. If the relative turns out to be incompetent, further problems may occur.

Recreation, Leave and Furlough

Personnel need some downtime to blow off steam or just sleep. Troops will accept that sometimes this is not possible on an active deployment but wherever possible they will expect a chance to at least carouse in a dingy army bar. Similarly, personnel will expect to be able to take a few days' leave from time-to-time, and to go on a long furlough (weeks or even months) if they need to. All of these activities impose security risks, which must be managed, and it may be tempting to lock down the unit when not conducting active operations. However, this leads to fatigue and a drop in morale.

A wise commander learns to balance recreation with security. All personnel reach a point where they need some time away from stress and military routine. Granting a furlough can mean the difference between losing someone highly skilled for a few months or having them decline into ineffectiveness, perhaps placing others in danger along the way. Such matters are part of the day-to-day management of the unit and a situation where adequate leave and recreation is not granted will usually result in a Minor Morale check after 2D weeks. The unit may be willing to tolerate conditions for longer if there is an obvious need.

For example, a mercenary unit is working a tough urban counterinsurgency ticket and has to remain confined to a walled compound when not out on patrol. Facilities for recreation are minimal but the troops can see the need for security. The Referee decides that the first Minor Morale check will not be required for 4D weeks instead of the usual 2D but after that the force must make a check every 2D weeks.

Severely Hazardous Assignments

Mercenaries accept a certain degree of risk in their duties and under most circumstances would not be unduly upset by the prospect of danger. However, if ordered into a situation of severe danger the unit must make a Major Morale check if the action seems unnecessary or a Minor Morale check if there is a clear reason why the risk is warranted. For example, the unit is ordered to assault a strongly held position immediately rather than waiting for additional support. This is extremely hazardous and might merit a Major Morale check. However, the troops know they are being sent in to clear anti-aerospace weapons that are preventing refugees from being evacuated from a collapsing pocket. The MOR check is downgraded to Minor since there is an obvious need for immediate action.

Weak Leadership

A force that has cause to doubt the competence of its officers or who witness a serious challenge to their authority must make a MOR check. This will be Minor in the case of a small challenge but an incident such as a public brawl between senior officers might require a Major Morale check. For example, the company commander storms into the mess hall to break up a harangue by disaffected elements within the unit. Far from quelling the rabble-rousing, the officer is browbeaten and ends up looking confused and ineffectual. The unit must make a Minor Morale check immediately or lose a point of MOR and there may be additional problems brewing.

REPUTATION

A unit's reputation is absolutely vital to obtaining good contracts and might even convince some enemies to retreat or surrender without a fight. Reputation is related to the CEI of a unit but how a force is perceived can vary quite considerably from its actual capabilities. Reputation is rated like most other characteristics, from 0–15 and gives bonuses in the usual manner.

When a unit first forms its Reputation (REP) is established at a value of CEI –1D, although even before operations begin this can be modified by good marketing and making it known that the unit has reputable personnel or excellent equipment. Most clients do some research before committing to a contract, so being able to demonstrate that no member of the unit has less than three years' service in a regular force or that the commander has been awarded several decorations for combat leadership can allow better terms to be negotiated or clauses to be removed from a contract. This is abstracted using the unit's REP characteristic. For rules related to REP between tickets, see *Book 2: Running a Mercenary Unit*, page 5.

Reputation can be used during a ticket in circumstances where the perceived reliability or combat capability of the force is more important than its actual capabilities. For example, the commander of a mercenary unit is trying to negotiate the surrender of an enemy unit. Local forces are not always merciful or respectful of the law when handling prisoners, so the mercenary commander offers guarantees of safe conduct based on the reputation of the mercenary unit. This allows a Persuade or Diplomat task be modified by the unit's REP DM. If the agreement is not honoured, the mercenaries will suffer damage to their reputation. This might result in them having to fight their patron's forces to protect prisoners but such is the price of pledging a soldier's honour.

CHAPTER - EIGHT

FORCE CAPABILITY RECORD

Once the Force Capability Assessment has been completed and the unit's characteristics such as CEI and MOR are known, the effectiveness of the formation can be presented in a simple shorthand form. The example here is of the Second Swindonian Rifles, a TL9 infantry company equipped with some light vehicles for transportation, with no artillery weapons and only a small aerospace defence component. The unit does have a good electronic warfare capability in the form of a custom-built systems suite mounted on a grav truck but otherwise its support capabilities are lacking. The force's Combat DM is tripled since this is its primary role.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Second Swindonian Rifles	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	9	+3
Bombardment	0	0
Aerospace	2	–2
Support	5	–1
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	6	0

A Force Capability Record can be created for any sub-unit or detachment if this is deemed necessary. It is worthwhile creating one for a sub-unit that is regularly detached or in a situation where missions will be carried out by different parts of the parent force.

CHAPTER - NINE

MISSION AND OPERATION RESOLUTION

The following system allows a quick resolution of actions and tasks that will affect the course of a mission or ticket but which are not specifically combat oriented. It is possible to resolve a minor skirmish as an Operation or Mission if this seems desirable or to play it out with the standard *Traveller* rules. However, combat is normally abstracted using the rules found on the following page, or page 85 for larger engagements.

The mission or operation resolution system is one of the core mechanics for a mercenary campaign. It allows the quick resolution of actions that take place 'off-camera' or which are too complex and time-consuming to play out under the normal rules. The unit's ECEI, or a detachment's DEI, is used as a DM when resolving a situation, although some events can be narrated by the Referee rather than resolving them in this manner. Such 'scripted' events are normally used to drive the plotline forward but the Travellers should not be railroaded or subjected to arbitrary setbacks over which they have no control.

For example, it is up to the Referee whether the unit moving from the starport to its forward operating base is played out in detail, resolved with a single ECEI check or simply narrated in as much or as little detail as desired. As a rule, the more chance there is for something to go wrong, the more likely the Referee will want to play out the scene.

For abstract resolution, an appropriate Traveller makes a 2D roll and adds the modifier for ECEI or DEI, as determined by the Referee. Any additional modifiers are also applied to this check. The result is determined by the Resolution table.

Resolution Modifiers

Circumstance	Example	DM
Specialist or expert assistance is available	A local liaison officer with good knowledge of the area is with the detachment carrying out the operation.	+2
Improved equipment or lavish resources are available	The Travellers have access to a multispectral sensor package, sniffer dogs and a local guide as they search for insurgents hiding in a wood.	+1
Operation is carried out under pressure	This wall of sandbags has to be ready before the enemy gets into firing range.	–1
Operation is carried out under extreme pressure	The enemy is just within firing range and is taking potshots while they wait for their tanks to catch up.	–2
Distractions	The embedded news crew are getting in the way again.	–1
Difficult circumstances	Comms are down, visibility is poor, scared refugees keep running through the unit's position and enemy snipers are targeting anyone who so much as sticks their head up for a look around.	–3
Reluctance	At least some of the unit's personnel have lost confidence in the command team or their own ability to succeed and are reluctant to enter a fight they expect to lose.	–1
Internal Divisions	Some elements of the force or nearby allies are on the brink of mutiny and will ignore orders they disagree with or even openly challenge them. Support is unlikely to be forthcoming.	–3

Multiple factors can apply but the Referee should be cautious about making things too easy for the Travellers. If they are allowed to claim several advantages every time they do anything the actual competence of their force (modelled by ECEI) becomes meaningless. Note that most tasks will be at least partially completed, although often in a way that causes additional problems. For example, if a squad of mercenaries is supposed to enter a building and clear it of insurgents and the result is a complete failure, they may not even get into the building. On the other hand, partial success could mean they clear the building but take casualties, or that they are in control of most of the building, with a couple of insurgents at the top of the stairs shooting at anyone trying to get at them.

Levels of success are for the guidance of the Referee when narrating the outcome of the operation. Exactly what 'partial success' or any other result means will depend on what the Travellers were trying to achieve.

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

CEI checks differ from skill checks in that they represent a team effort making use of a great many skills. Such activity could perhaps be modelled using a truly gargantuan task chain but even then there are factors that would not be represented. These include the ability of the force to work together and the overall competence level of the personnel involved.

Most CEI checks produce a positive outcome, in that the job will get done. However, a unit with a mediocre CEI or ECEI will perform their tasks in a sloppy and less-than-effective manner. This does not mean that everything has to go wrong in grand style. An Incident or Mishap indicated by the CEI check outcome can be minor or trivial; something reported as a footnote about the operation rather than a crisis the Travellers have to deal with. A string of such minor incidents should alert the Travellers to the fact that their unit is not performing as well as might be hoped.

Resolution

2D	Outcome	Details
0 or less	Complete Failure	The task was a fiasco and was not completed. A Mishap occurs.
1–2	Failure	The task was begun but dissolved into chaos and remains incomplete. A Mishap occurs.
3–4	Minimal Success	An obviously poor performance which embarrasses the unit, but the detachment was more or less able to stumble through to the end of the task. An Incident occurs.
5	Partial Success	A sloppy performance but maybe nobody saw the mistakes. Roll 2D; on 10+ a Mishap occurs.
6	Success	The job got done but there was an Incident.
7	Success	The job got done. Some commanders will be satisfied with this level of performance; some would be relieved that it went off OK.
8	Solid Success	A decent job, with room for some lessons learned. However, an Opportunity occurs during the operation.
9–10	Solid Success	A solid performance, good enough to satisfy even a critical observer.
11–12	Impressive Success	A textbook performance. Roll 2D: on 12+ the detachment or parent unit gains MOR +1.
13–14	Impressive Success	Near-perfect resolution, as good as anyone would expect in an exercise. Roll 2D; on 10+ the force gains MOR +1. An Opportunity occurs.
15 or more	Perfect Success	Everything goes perfectly or even better than that. Newer members of the unit are given a chance to try out their skills in a 'live' situation and even they perform brilliantly. Anyone watching would think this was a staged propaganda film. Roll 2D; on 8+ the unit gains MOR +1. An Opportunity occurs.

One solution to this is to find ways to increase ECEI but this is a long-term undertaking and may not be possible under the current circumstances. The alternative is for the Travellers to create favourable circumstances for the task. Lavish equipment or expert advice can be simply factored into the CEI check as a modifier but additional DMs are available if the Travellers find a way to make use of their skills.

This will usually require a mini-adventure. For example, rather than simply abstracting a sweep for insurgents as a CEI check, the Travellers decide to roleplay it out a little. The unit commander gives some orders, other officers liaise with local forces and the leaders of nearby communities and the Referee calls for a Tactics check from whomever is in charge of the forces on the ground.

A well set up mission will gain the Travellers DM+1 or at most +2 on their CEI check, providing their skill checks produce a positive outcome. The mini-adventure is played out using the normal Traveller rules, after which the scale changes back to hole unit operations using CEI and ECEI.

NOTES ON RESOLUTION

Any mission or operation can be expanded into an adventure or the resolution system can be used to abstract everything that happens on a mission; however, the latter is best suited to a solo game. A Referee can use the resolution system creatively to generate impromptu adventures that will test the Travellers' skills. Some may be 'mini-adventures', short scenes to be played out in a few minutes, whilst others can be quite lengthy.

Mission or operation resolution can generate adventures in a variety of ways. For example, the Referee might resolve the activity then present the Travellers with the situation as it unfolds – an adventure happening whether or not they want it to – creating a situation for them to deal with based on the outcome indicated. If this approach is taken the Travellers may be able to alter the outcome of the situation for better or worse. Alternatively, the Travellers might be presented with a report on how things went and then have a mini-adventure as they question those responsible for the fiasco in the hope of determining just how it all went so badly wrong.

The Travellers will often delegate tasks and thus lack direct observation on how they were carried out. This can create interesting situations in which they have to sort out the aftermath without concrete information. For example, the Referee rolls to resolve a routine patrol, smiles cryptically and informs the Travellers that the junior officer in charge of the patrol reports a successful mission with no incidents of note. A little later a comms operator informs the Travellers that the mayor of the local town is requesting an urgent conference regarding the behaviour of armed mercenaries in a local bar. Clearly something is afoot but sorting out exactly what might be a challenge.

Note that the resolution system is intended to give the Referee an indication of how things went. The Travellers may not be so certain; things look okay but something could have gone wrong or an apparent shambles might have resolved itself in the end. The Referee can always decide that the dice rolls are all there is to an incident and likewise always has the option to expand an operation or create an entire adventure from the results.

INCIDENTS

An Incident occurs when indicated by the mission and operation resolution system. Most Incidents are negative, reflecting the fact that the simplest task can go awry. Incidents normally occur during the resolution of an operation and are noted at the scale of a detachment or small segment of a unit. Incidents involving the whole force can be scaled up to match the situation.

Incidents are spurs to adventure or at least short challenges that will keep the Travellers thinking. For example, an Incident occurs as a detachment makes a patrol and suddenly the Travellers have a request for guidance from the patrol leader. Apparently a local force is insisting the mercenaries are somewhere they should not be and are trying to detain them. The mercenaries will not relinquish their weapons and an armed standoff has begun. The Travellers are going to have to be diplomatic or perhaps bring reinforcements and negotiate from a position of overwhelming strength. What if that precipitates a shooting incident? How will that affect the ticket?

Incidents

2D	Incident
2	Something goes suddenly wrong with a piece of equipment. Failure is unlikely and the timing is as bad is it could possibly be. That suggests deliberate sabotage but there is no immediately obvious suspect.
3	A routine task turns complicated or dangerous, fast. This may be hostile action such as a band of insurgents making an attack or escape, or could be a passive threat such as hazardous terrain or an unmarked minefield. It might be a threatening situation that stops short of violence, such as belligerent protesters or an 'unfriendly-but-not-enemy' force making provocative actions.
4	A member of the unit suffers serious injury due to inattention or equipment failure. If an interaction is taking place with outsiders the incident might be misconstrued and result in confrontation.
5	The situation is complicated by the arrival of a local official or another force, which begins interfering or behaving in a suspicious manner.
6	A newly promoted or transferred junior leader decided to take charge and get things done. This irritates more experienced personnel who have established a good working practice… or maybe they are just set in their ways and resent being asked to make a proper effort.
7	Confusion reigns! Garbled orders and bad information result in the mishandling of simple tasks. A patrol might get lost or stray into the wrong area; vehicles get stuck or develop faults due to poor maintenance. The mercenary force will appear embarrassingly incompetent. The job more or less gets done, however.
8	A dispute breaks out over necessary equipment or a key member of the unit whose skills are wanted in two places at the same time. The resulting bickering derails the task at hand.
9	Important and possibly irreplaceable equipment is missing or inoperable. Unless a workaround can be improvised the task cannot be completed.
10	The detachment reports the job done in double-quick time. They may have actually achieved that or might be cutting corners.
11	A complex task turns out to be extremely easy. Suspiciously so, in fact…
12	An ordinary member of the unit has a moment of sheer brilliance and displays hidden potential. The task goes off exceptionally well but why has this unremarkable soldier suddenly come to the fore?

MISHAPS

A Mishap is more serious than an Incident and will always be negative in nature. Where an Incident will usually lead to fairly minor events, a Mishap has the potential to become a serious incident. When a Mishap is indicated the Referee should roll 2D on the Mishaps table and extrapolate the details from there.

Mishap

2D	Outcome
2	Casualties are taken. The unit suffering the mishap loses 2D% of its personnel or equipment. Most casualties will be relatively minor injuries or could indicate personnel who have become lost or detached from the unit for a time.
3	A vehicle or piece of equipment belonging to the unit is involved in a minor collision or serious breakdown or causes a similar incident to happen to the property of local authorities or another mercenary unit.
4	A major piece or group of equipment has developed a fault or taken damage that makes it erratic. For example, the targeting system of the unit's artillery battery or the gravitic drives of its tank. Impose DM-1 on all checks involving that system until repaired.
5	One of the unit's minor systems, such as a vehicle or heavy weapon, suffers a malfunction and is out of action until fully repaired.
6	A unit member is seriously injured, requiring investigation.
7	A unit member suffers a minor injury, which may well be his own fault.
8	A unit member causes injury to someone outside the ship's company, creating a possible additional Incident.
9	A unit member manages to insult or offend someone important.
10	A nearby unit, installation or civilian community suffers a disaster and requires assistance. The Travellers' force is close enough to respond and would need a good reason not to, even if it will interfere with their current mission.
11	A communique arrives demanding an explanation for something the Travellers have (or have not) done. How legitimate the demand is depends on who is making it. The Travellers may or may not have given cause for the situation but will have to explain themselves to an unreceptive audience.
12	The Travellers' intelligence staff obtain information that makes them suspect most of their mission or even ticket briefing is based on faulty data. A thorough re-examination of all available information is required, which will take several days to complete. Until the incorrect information is identified and purged, all missions and operations (other than direct tasks such as weapons fire) are subject to DM-2.

Mishaps should always be expanded into an adventure unless there is a good reason not to. In many cases, the Travellers will become aware of the Mishap after it has occurred and have to deal with the outcome. For example, if a batch of faulty ammunition is discovered, the Travellers will most likely learn about it in a report from the logistics officer after the situation had been resolved. If the fault was serious enough to take the artillery battery out of action the Travellers are likely to be informed immediately.

Depending on how the Travellers treat their subordinates, personnel involved in a Mishap might try to conceal the fault and fix it without anyone knowing – especially if negligence was involved. In some cases, perhaps a low-morale unit whose command team are harsh on those they blame for failure – the fault might go entirely unreported and only come to light much later… maybe in the middle of a battle.

Much depends on how the Travellers treat their personnel and how motivated and professional they are. This is indicated by the units CEI and the general culture of the force it belongs to. In some forces the 'vertical stroke' falls upon everyone above the perpetrator of a mistake – or the person who gets the blame – regardless of how fair or unfair this may be. In such an environment, blame-deflection may be more important than fixing the problem, which in turn creates an atmosphere of paranoia and mistrust among the troops while officers conceal their subordinates' shortcomings and try to avoid censure rather than doing a good job and being honest when something goes wrong… there are always personnel like this in any unit. Thus a Mishap might go unreported for a time, then suddenly become critically apparent when something else is going on.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities generally arise unexpectedly in the course of a mission or operation. Sometimes they are direct consequences of the actions taken by the mercenaries but it is not uncommon for the situation to be accidental. For example, the mercenaries attack an enemy unit just as a courier arrives with detailed plans for a forthcoming major offensive. There is no way the Travellers could have predicted the courier's presence. Of course, some of these 'lucky finds' are actually attempts by the enemy to plant false information. Opportunities are thus a good way of keeping the Travellers from realising what they have just accidentally found out is too good to be true.

Opportunities

2D	Outcome
2	The Travellers obtain a lead on an intelligence windfall, such as a high-value enemy officer or the location of a document cache. If the lead can be successfully followed up, significant advantages will be obtained.
3	During the operation the mercenaries encounter a person who asks for refuge with them. This may be an escaped prisoner, a foreign notable fearing for his life or a friendly intelligence operative needing to make a quick exit. The presence of this person will be an inconvenience for the Travellers but will bring advantages later in the ticket.
4	The Travellers become aware of an equipment cache or a friendly group willing to support their mission. This might be in the form of information, hospitality or supplies. Something as simple as fresh meat and fruit could raise morale after weeks of preserved rations.
5	A piece of highly useful data is obtained. The Travellers may 'cash in' this find at a later date, in return for information from the Referee or a bonus to resolve tasks during a mission.
6	Routine intelligence-gathering produces a lead on some minor threat such as the haven of a small insurgent group or enemy covert recon detachment. With some additional investigation the Travellers may be able to locate it.
7	The Travellers encounter a friend in an unexpected place, such as a retired former colleague in a new job. The old friend is probably willing to help out but may need something in return.
8	An allied unit arrives unexpectedly and is in a position to help out or support the Travellers for a few weeks.
9	A supply shipment arrives with a draft of additional personnel. This might be a mixed blessing, since they will have to be integrated mid-mission but among them are some talented people or replacements for missing personnel.
10	The Travellers are made aware of a weakness among their rivals or enemies. This might be a habit of always using the same tactics in battle or some piece of 'dirt' that can be useful in influencing the target. When used by the Travellers, the intel gives them DM+2 for one mission against one specific target. It can only be used once.
11	A piece of equipment in use by Travellers' or their allies turns out to be a non-standard variant with additional functions. These were not a great success and were not integrated into future designs, which means that few people know about them. On one occasion when the Travellers face a technical problem (for example, inability to resolve critical signals-intelligence data) this capability provides a solution.
12	A non-Traveller, older than most personnel of their rank, turns out to have had a very respectable academic career before they became a mercenary. Their long-disused knowledge of obscure alien art, dead languages or weird weather phenomena can be defined at any time the Travellers want, providing a solution to an otherwise difficult situation.

Like Mishaps, Opportunities are just begging to be expanded into adventures. They tend to be less immediate in nature, however. In some cases, the opportunity is something the Travellers become aware of and can choose to follow up or use to their advantage at a later date. In other cases, the opportunity might not present itself straight away. For example, the table indicates that a person asks for refuge with the Travellers' unit… but they are in the middle of crossing an airless moon. The Referee might decide they stumble upon an escape pod containing a single survivor in an emergency low berth and, once revived, the survivor turns out to have useful information. Alternatively, the Referee might file the opportunity for the present and implement it when the Travellers are somewhere it can plausibly occur.

TICKET EVENTS

Events that occur between tickets are generally 'campaign events', in that they are significant to the progress of the campaign as a whole. Those that occur during a ticket or one of the missions associated with it are usually of smaller significance but can still complicate a ticket. This in turn can affect the progress of the campaign, especially if a critical ticket goes better or worse than expected.

Almost any event the Referee can conceive might happen in the course of a ticket but care should be taken before imposing anything that might be setting-changing. The collapse of a planetary government may have significant implications beyond the immediate mercenary ticket; it will create a power vacuum that might lead to more employment for mercenaries but also disruption to interstellar trade and possibly the all-important supply chain.

The following events are intended as a starting point for the Referee's imagination. There is no reason why an event cannot be repeated or why it will play out the same way each time. Ticket events can be inserted at any point the Referee sees fit, and can vary in scope and severity.

Communication Breakdown: Communications or relations with the client break down to the point where the Travellers do not know what is going on. Alternatively, the client organisation or government might collapse, leaving the Travellers wondering if their contract is still valid. An extreme version of this event might see the Travellers stranded without supplies but denied permission (or not granted it due to communications difficulties) to sort out the problem themselves. Attempting to withdraw might be a violation of the contract if it is still in force and could result in conflict with local forces.

Deception: The Travellers might have been deceived about their contract. Perhaps the nature of the enemy is concealed from them or the situation is misrepresented. Alternatively, the Travellers might be collateral victims of an entirely unrelated piece of deception. For example, an arms broker might have hired mercenaries (perhaps even the Travellers themselves) to stir up trouble in the hope of making sales. Multiple layers of deception are possible, creating a highly complex situation for the Travellers to resolve.

Disease in the Camp: Mercenaries tend to be careful about local diseases and are generally immunised against common afflictions at regular intervals. All the same, it is possible for a unit to be affected by local disease, especially if operating in unhealthy terrain such as jungle or swamp. Alternatively, the Travellers might be largely immune to a disease that is wreaking havoc in the local area. They might be called upon to help, outside their remit, or find themselves in the position of being the only able-bodied and organised people around. What they do with that opportunity – or responsibility, depending on how you look at it – is up to them.

Embedded Personnel: The Travellers' unit is assigned observers, a news crew, a liaison team or some other embedded personnel and then told to get on with business as usual. The embedded personnel might be well-meaning but clueless or may have an ulterior motive such as obtaining evidence that can be used to void the mercenaries' contract.

False Alarm: One of the other ticket events appears to be unfolding but it turns out that intelligence reports were wrong or the event is so minor in scope as not to matter in the grand scheme of things. The Travellers might over-react to a situation they think needs decisive action, rerating additional problems for themselves.

Friends in Strange Places: The Travellers encounter members of a unit they have worked with before or corporate officials with whom they have good relations. Whilst this might just be a chance encounter, it is strange to meet these people here, at this time. The Travellers may need to investigate the situation but risk offending their friends.

Modified Orders: The Travellers' orders are suddenly revises or they are sent some additional equipment without explanation. This might be a genuine snarl-up or circumstances may have unexpectedly changed. The situation may require a rethink of the current deployments it. In this case, the Referee must decide whether to generate a new set of mission success criteria or watch the Travellers scramble to accomplish everything expected of them.

Request for Assistance: A world government or organisation requests assistance in a matter that would normally be outside the unit's remit, such as providing security for government installations during serious unrest. Alternatively, the mercenaries might have a problem dumped on their doorstep. An example might be the arrival of several truckloads of refugees at the mercenaries' base, accompanied by escorts or local officials who make themselves scarce in short order. The mercenaries are not required by their contract to look after these people but refusing might cause other problems. On the other hand, the situation could be a ruse to infiltrate the mercenaries' secure area or place them in a compromised position.

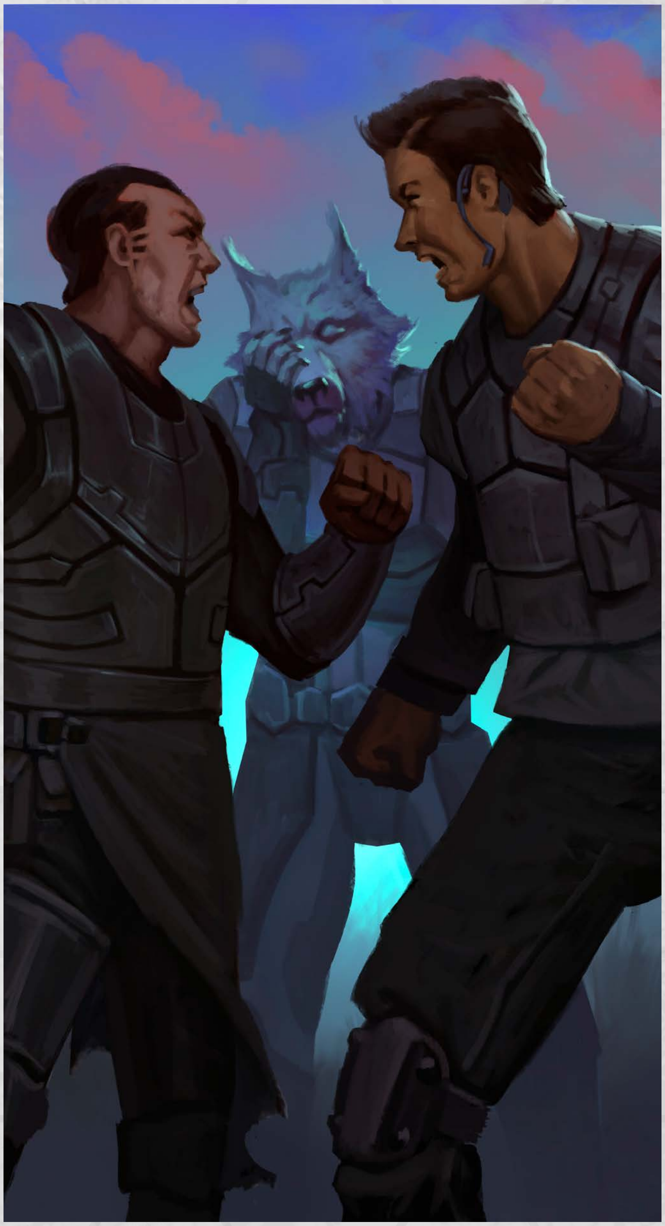
Third Party: The local situation becomes more complex as additional factions emerge or the patron government fragments. Exactly who is the enemy and who can be relied upon become difficult questions to answer. Alternatively, other mercenary forces might enter the equation. These might be allies who are rivals or who the Travellers have a history of conflict against or enemies who are former allies.

Quagmire in the Making: Cross-cutting agendas result in additional complications for the Travellers. A world government, a sometimes-friendly faction among the population and a major corporation all have fingers in the local pie and are influencing local officials to support their viewpoint. The Travellers' orders are repeatedly changed or influence is brought to bear on them as different factions come to the fore.

Supply Shortage: The supply situation is worse than the Travellers thought. Perhaps some of their stores are damaged or spoiled, or a supply shipment fails to arrive. Alternatively, the shortage could be caused by orders to transfer supplies and ammunition to an allied unit. A straight refusal to do so might be legal within the terms of the contract but will cause friction among allied forces at a time when the mercenaries really need to be able to rely on them.

Under the Microscope: The Travellers are rather suddenly informed that their unit is to be visited by a high-ranking officer or important official in the client government or perhaps by a peacekeeping or oversight agency. Whatever the specifics may be, the activities of the unit to date and what they do whilst they are under scrutiny, will be carefully examined. This might be an inappropriate intrusion by a busybody or local government that does not really have the authority or could be mandated by the mercenaries' contract. The Travellers are expected to be polite no matter how annoying these people get and may be expected to 'put on a show' or grant access to equipment and facilities they would rather not. There is always the possibility that the visit is a cover for something else, perhaps a briefing for a top-secret mission or request to take care of a problem 'off the books'.

Unrest in the Ranks: A series of minor incidents escalates into a serious morale problem or internal dispute between sub-units or personnel within the unit. The cause might be a mistake made by someone, which led to consequences for another group or it might be simple troublemaking on the part of disaffected personnel. By the time it comes to the notice of the Travellers, the matter is quite serious and has started to affect efficiency. Alternatively, an officer might be at odds with their subordinates with similar effects.



CHAPTER-TEN

RESOLVING COMBAT

Combat is an occupational hazard for mercenaries and the heart of a mercenary-themed *Traveller* campaign. Any combat situation can be played out using the standard *Traveller* rules if this seems desirable. It is possible to abstract a large-scale encounter, then play out a part of it as an adventure. This might not involve any fighting; other activities can take place against the backdrop of a battle. For example, the Travellers might be involved in evacuating casualties from an endangered field hospital whilst a firefight rages nearby.

The Referee has the option to script combat situations, especially where the result is a foregone conclusion or if the outcome is necessary to the campaign storyline. This must be done judiciously, as Travellers who have no control over their fate are likely to become disaffected. Wildly inappropriate results thrown up by the vagaries of the dice can be toned down at the Referee's discretion but heroic one-tank rampages have happened in history. Unless the outcome is obviously impossible it may be better to retain it and impose some explanation for the sudden collapse of an apparently invincible force.

Combat in a mercenary campaign must be resolved in a certain amount of detail, since casualty levels and degrees of success have long-term implications for a unit. A force that wins its battles through brute force may have trouble replacing casualties after a while, whereas one averse to losing expensive equipment might not get results quickly enough for its clients' liking.

Combat is resolved over a series of phases. A short encounter or surprise raid on a single building might be over in just one combat phase but more commonly an encounter with enemy forces requires the accrual of advantages until the opposition retreats or surrenders.

The process for resolving combat takes into account the tactics chosen, the skill of the opposing commanders, tech level of the forces involved and their combat capability. Resolution moves through a series of phases until one side or the other decides to break off or surrender, or is defeated.

1. Reconnaissance and Intelligence Phase
2. Preparation Phase
3. Initial Combat Phase
4. Subsequent Combat Phases
5. Resolution Phase

The Travellers are the Focus… Except When They are Not

A mercenary campaign is about the Travellers and their unit. Whether they are attacking or defending, whether they are ambushed or working to a detailed plan, they are the focus of combat resolution. The resolution system is built with this assumption in mind. If a combat between two forces not commanded by the Travellers is to be resolved, the same system can be used but the question of whose point of view resolution is to be carried out from must be answered.

The Referee is free to choose and circumstances will often suggest which side is most appropriate as the focus. Usually this will be the side that has the initiative, which generally means the attacker. However, in an encounter battle or a scrappy engagement made up of fleeting contacts this may not be clear. A good rule of thumb is to resolve the action from the point of view of whichever side the Travellers are most likely to get good information from. Resolution can produce quite a lot of detail, which the Travellers are more likely to learn from allies than from enemies. However, if the outcome is all that matters either side can be the focus.

RECONNAISSANCE AND INTELLIGENCE PHASE

Before an action begins, the commanders on each side have an opportunity to obtain information and decide how best to act upon it. Many commanders, especially amateurish militia leaders, do not do so and blunder in guns blazing. This can occasionally gain them surprise but more often leads to an ambush or disastrous head-on attack against a prepared opponent.

During the Reconnaissance and Intelligence phase, the Travellers should be presented with what information they have and – usually – be given an opportunity to obtain more. In a situation where the mercenaries are attacked by surprise they will not have the chance to send out patrols or call for drone overflights but will still be able to call upon information they already have.

In the Reconnaissance and Intelligence phase the Travellers should resolve an Intelligence Event (see page 36) and apply the results to their Tactics checks throughout the engagement. If the Travellers have been specifically gathering intelligence on the force they are engaging or its parent formation they may already have resolved an Intelligence Event on the subject. If so, they may use the better of the two results. Normally this will occur if the Travellers have been diligent in their intelligence gathering, which might mean cultivating contacts or assigning intelligence staff to analysing enemy capabilities. Those who fly by the seat of their pants must resolve an event at the beginning of the engagement and simply hope that they know enough not to land themselves in trouble.

If combat is imminent, there is no chance to obtain further information and the engagement moves to the Preparation phase. The Travellers may choose to do so even if there is time, but in many situations a final reconnaissance can be undertaken. For example, if a strike team is in place ready to enter a compound held by enemy militia but has not been detected, the mercenaries might wait a short while for a drone overflight or information relayed by an observation team.

When a final reconnaissance is carried out in the face of the enemy it is usually by technological means such as drones, electronic sensors and the like, or by a stealthy direct observation by personnel. Reconnaissance is not always covert, especially when there has been previous combat. The enemy still might not realise they are being reconnoitred for an attack. For example, if skirmishing has been ongoing for days, the enemy might not realise that the goal of a particular fighting patrol was to locate their heavy weapons positions.

Reconnaissance Detection

To realise a reconnaissance is taking place rather than normal activity the target must pass a Routine (6+) CEI check. The difficulty is increased to Average (8+) if one of the factors below is in place and to Difficult (10+) if more than one is in place. The same process is used by the Travellers if they are being observed prior to an attack.

- Stealthy or covert 'human intelligence' such as an undetected patrol, scout snipers observing and reporting back or an operative pretending to be an innocent civilian observing the target.
- Use of sensors the enemy cannot or fails to detect, such as laser microphones and thermal cameras against a TL3 enemy who has never heard of them or against an enemy not taking suitable precautions.
- Use of stealthy sensor platforms or long-range sensors operating from beyond the range of enemy detection.

For example, the mercenaries have slipped a scout sniper team into position to observe the target. This might end up being a mini-adventure in its own right, as might extracting the team, but once they are in position they can observe the enemy, who has no idea they are there. Their sensor equipment is not fancy but the enemy is complacent and fails to take precautions. With two factors in place the enemy's chance to detect the reconnaissance is Difficult (10+).

Reconnaissance Outcomes

A successful final reconnaissance allows a modified Intelligence Event to be resolved. The intelligence officer of the force makes an Investigate check as normal, with DM+2 if the reconnaissance was not detected. The Referee may award additional DMs if the Travellers planned and executed their final recon well. Those that prefer to rely on abstracting such matters cannot expect additional bonuses.

Reconnaissance Outcome

Effect of Investigate Check	Result
–6 or worse	The final reconnaissance went badly wrong. Confusing or misleading information is gathered and whether or not the enemy detected the reconnaissance operation at the time, they are now aware that combat is imminent. Surprise is not possible and DM-2 applies to all the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat.
–4 to –5	Confusing or misleading information is gathered and whether or not the enemy detected the reconnaissance operation at the time, they are now aware that combat is imminent. Surprise is not possible and DM-1 applies to all the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat.
–3 to –1	Partial information is available but it is inaccurate in places or has serious gaps. DM-1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.
0	Sufficient information is available but it is vague or patchy and contains a number of inaccuracies. DM-1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.
1–3	Sufficient information is available and reasonably reliable. No modifier is applied to mission and operation resolution.
3–5	Good, solid intelligence is available. The Travellers may choose one benefit; either the enemy's intended combat tactic is known or DM+1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.
6 or better	Good, solid intelligence is available. The enemy's intended combat tactic is known and DM+1 applies to the Travellers' checks to resolve the combat and to achieve surprise.

Ambushes and Unexpected Encounters

In the situation where one or both forces is not aware of the other, it is necessary to determine if they become aware before contact. This is represented by an ECEI check. The difficulty of this check is normally Average (8+) for forces on the move. A force that is static but has not taken pains to conceal itself alters the check to detect an approaching enemy to Routine (6+); the chance to be detected is not changed. If a force has carefully set up an ambush it counts as static, as above, and the difficulty to detect it increases to Difficult (10+). If one force fails to detect the other it is treated as subject to Tactical Surprise (see following page). Mutual surprise is entirely possible.

If a force has a dedicated reconnaissance element, the Referee may grant DM+1 to +3 to detect the enemy force. Tech Level DM may also be applicable, at the Referee's discretion. In this case the Tech Level DMs are opposed; a high-tech force may be able to conceal itself from a lower-tech force's sensor equipment.

Example

The Travellers' battalion is transiting a mountain pass where their enemies have set up an ambush. The Travellers' force is primarily motorised but first company contains a platoon of light grav tanks used for reconnaissance and fire support. The force is equipped to TL12, whereas the locals have only TL6 equipment. The Referee grants DM+2 for the reconnaissance element and allows the Travellers to apply their DM+2 for technological superiority. The locals have no idea that their camouflage netting is useless against advanced sensor equipment aboard the grav tanks.

The locals' ECEI DM is –1, and is applied to their check to detect the approaching Travellers. This is Routine (6+) and even inexperienced troops such as theirs have no difficulty noticing the approaching battalion in sufficient time. The Travellers need to succeed in a Difficult (10+) ECEI check to spot the ambush but have DM+1 for their ECEI and a total DM+4 for their reconnaissance element and its sensors. They, too, become aware of the enemy before entering the ambush. The Travellers can now decide how to proceed. They might withdraw and find another route or try to flank the ambushers and clear them. They might even charge right into the ambush zone, hoping to achieve surprise by sheer speed and aggression.

PREPARATION PHASE

The Preparation phase represents the last-minute orders, clearances and advisories issued by the commanders on each side, along with allowing resolution of any preparation the combatants may have engaged in. Preparation, in this context, does not refer to a preparatory bombardment – that is covered by combat phases using the Bombard tactic. Instead Preparation represents everything from doctrine and training to final positioning. All of this activity leads to the force being in the best possible position and state of readiness. Poor preparation months ago, in the form of training and doctrine, may lead to personnel having insufficient ammunition or the ammunition for a particular weapon system being inaccessible aboard a different vehicle. Ineffective training or poor orders may lead to a unit breaking cover early, bad coordination resulting in a lack of covering fire, or units making piecemeal local actions instead of a concerted operation.

Long and short-term preparation contributes negatively and positively in a myriad ways to a unit's performance. It is abstracted with an Average (8+) ECEI check for a whole unit or DEI for a detachment. The Effect of this check is added to any DM resulting from intelligence and reconnaissance, and will be used throughout the resolution of the combat.

A unit that is aware of its enemy can attempt to achieve surprise during the Preparation phase. This normally means making a concealed or stealthy approach and either launching an ambush or making an unexpected attack. Surprise, or an equivalent state, can also be achieved by technological means, such as when a force has capabilities the other does not expect or cannot counter. Examples of the latter include deploying tanks and armoured vehicles against an enemy that has no weapons or training to counter them, or making a meteoric assault from orbit onto enemy positions that have no aerospace defences.

A force that wishes to attempt to surprise another must either have a capability the other is unaware of or cannot counter (technological surprise) or must be in a position to attack at an unexpected time and/or place (tactical surprise). An enemy that does not suspect there is any prospect of being attacked may be subject to strategic surprise. This might occur when the target thinks they are completely safe or when they do not know hostilities are possible. For example, if a nation makes secret preparations and disguises its intentions its initial attack may achieve strategic surprise.

Achieving surprise imposes a DM on all checks to resolve combat. Its starting value depends on the type of surprise achieved and the DM is reduced by one in each subsequent combat phase. If multiple types of surprise are achieved, only the largest DM is used. Mutual surprise, such as when two patrols blunder into one another, can be assumed to cancel out but if two forces both achieve different types of surprise the smaller DM is deducted from the larger. For example, the military of a target planet is taken completely by surprise when infiltrators attack. They gain DM+5 due to strategic surprise but encounter a defensive force of warbots and automated emplacements they knew nothing about. This is a technological surprise and results in DM+2. The Referee subtracts one from the other and imposes DM+3 on the attackers' checks.

Technological Surprise

Technological surprise can only occur when the target faces an unexpected and largely un-countered capability. This is unusual, unless the target has failed to equip their forces properly. A group of ill-equipped insurgents who have no gas protection could suffer technological surprise if attacked with tear gas or something nastier. If they had no anti-armour weapons and came under attack by armoured vehicles the same situation might occur. However, most militaries have at least basic measures in place to deal with most threats. All the same, it is possible to achieve technological surprise by taking away capabilities the force has come to rely upon. For example, disabling the central communications network of a highly integrated force might work or rendering its drones and advanced sensors useless through electronic warfare.

To achieve technological surprise, a force must make a valid case for why it might apply, then succeed in a Difficult (10+) Tactics check. If successful, the force gains DM+D3 for surprise.

Tactical Surprise

Tactical surprise occurs when a force attacks at an unexpected time or place. The enemy may not be aware combat is about to occur – for example a force pursuing raiders could still be surprised by an ambush. To achieve tactical surprise it is necessary to succeed in a Difficult (10+) Tactics check with a suitable plan or situation in place. If successful a DM equal to the Effect of the check is applied.

Strategic Surprise

Strategic surprise is only possible when a force has no idea it might be attacked or is incredibly complacent. To achieve strategic surprise it is necessary to succeed in a Very Difficult (12+) Tactics check under suitable circumstances. If successful the force gains DM+1D plus the Effect of the check. If unsuccessful the force may immediately check for tactical surprise.

OVERSTRENGTH AND UNDERSTRENGTH FORCES

The combat resolution rules assume that the forces engaged are roughly average size for their type. A force that is above the average size for its type by up to 25% is referred to as 'overstrength' and gains DM+1 on checks to resolve combat. This is increased to DM+2 if the force is formally organised as a reinforced version of its type. Examples of reinforced formations include an infantry company that has six platoons rather than the usual upper limit of five – plus an efficient command structure to accommodate the extra personnel – or a normal-strength infantry battalion that has robotic fire support weapon platforms incorporated into its companies.

A force is considered understrength if is contains less than 80% of its nominal personnel or equipment. DMs for being over or under strength are as follows:

Force Strength Modifiers

Force Level	DM
Reinforced	+2
Overstrength (121-150% of nominal size)	+1
81–120% of normal strength	0
61–80%	–1
51–60%	–2
41–50%	–3
31–40%	–4
21–30%	–5
11–20%	–6
6–10%	–7
1–5%	–8

The modifier for one level of force size disparity is DM–4, whereas a battalion at 25% of nominal strength could have around 150 personnel and be effectively company-sized. A battalion at this strength receives DM–5, and would actually be at a disadvantage against a fully-formed company. This is reasonable, as the battalion will have gaps in its organisation and be severely disrupted. If the unit's commanders want they can reorganise the force during the preparation phase of any subsequent combat.

Amalgamated, Reorganised and Scratch Forces
During the Preparation phase a unit's commanders can attempt an emergency reorganization of their forces. This can also be done in less urgent style if the Travellers have time. A careful reorganization takes 2D+12 hours, and if interrupted the force suffers DM-4 on checks to resolve combat. A hurried reorganisation can be performed on the fly but has the potential to go very wrong.

To make a hurried reorganisation or amalgamation of forces the officer overseeing it must make a Very Difficult (12+) Tactics check. Any negative Effect of this check is applied as a DM to resolve the unit's next combat, in addition to any DM for being a Scratch or Provisional force. A careful reorganisation is completed automatically. In both cases the resulting formation is referred to as a 'Scratch' force. Scratch forces suffer DM-2 on all checks to resolve combat and on CEI, ECEI or DEI checks. After one combat or 1D days, a Scratch force is upgraded to Provisional status and now suffers DM-1 in all checks. A force remains Provisional until formally reorganised over 2D days, with suitable personnel assigned or promoted into positions suitable for the continued functioning of the unit as a formal combat force.

Reorganisation can be done in either direction. A shattered battalion could be broken down into as Provisional company-sized force and two Provisional platoons or a collection of units could be amalgamated into a Scratch or Provisional battalion. It is possible the mercenaries may build their force up into a larger one in the course of a series of battles by absorbing the remnants of local forces. This assumes the absorbed forces are compatible – they must be of generally similar type, tech level and training standard, and be formally organised military units or experienced militia. If a mercenary force instead recruits a horde of untrained people, it will have to recalculate its CBAS, CEI and similar values using the process detailed on page 53.

TACTICS SELECTION

At the end of the preparation phase each force decides on what tactic it will use in the first phase of combat. Unless orders are changed or there is a plan to change tactics at a given time or in specific circumstances the force will continue to use this tactic until the combat is resolved. If reconnaissance has uncovered one side's chosen tactic it is revealed before the opposing force chooses theirs. Tactics are discussed on page 89.

COMBAT PHASES

Each Combat phase, the force that has the initiative – this is almost always the attacker – makes a check to resolve the outcome of that phase. This check is subject to DMs for surprise, Tech Level and whichever of the unit's CBAS values applies. There may be negative DMs for the opposition's CBAS characteristic and Tech Level. In addition, DMs for tactics and environment may apply. The fight goes on until the Travellers achieve victory, are defeated or until they decide to break off.

It is possible to break off from a losing fight then come back for another attempt or try to turn a defeat around by an immediate counterattack. A previously defeated force (or one that has broken off a losing engagement then re-engaged) begins with DM-2 (figured into the running DM) and an additional DM-2 for each subsequent failed attempt. Battering the force to pieces against impossible odds will lead to mutiny.

If a routed force is ordered back into action, it will refuse or make a token attempt then go to ground and stay there unless its leaders can make Very Difficult (12+) Leadership check. Even then, the force suffers DM-4 to its combat resolution checks. Ordering a force into action in this way may result in the loss of MOR if a Minor Morale check is not successful.

Outcome DMs

Total all DMs for the Travellers' force from the following:

Surprise (this reduces by –1 in each subsequent phase until it reaches 0)
Reconnaissance and Intelligence
Preparation
Relevant CBAS characteristic
Force Tech Level
Cumulative DM for Advance result in previous phases
DM for force size disparity
Tactic DMs
Opposed Mobility DMs, in some situations
Any miscellaneous DMs which may apply

Subtract all DMs from the following:

Enemy relevant CBAS characteristic
Cumulative DM for Setback result in previous phases
Any miscellaneous DMs which may apply

This is applied to a roll on the Combat Phase Outcome table.

Combat Phase Outcome

2D + DMs	Outcome
0 or less	Rout: The force is totally defeated, suffering heavy casualties and a collapse of fighting power. This fight is lost and another attempt cannot be made without reinforcements, reorganisation and a period of recuperation.
1–2	Defeat: The force is defeated and must abandon the objective or fall back to a safe rally point. Another attempt can be made almost immediately but without a chance to regroup and recover from the defeat any subsequent attempts are made with DM-2, increased by an additional –2 for every failed attempt after the first.
3–5	Setback: The force suffers a setback, losing some ground or taking casualties. DM-1 is applied to further combat resolution checks. This DM is cumulative.
6–8	Deadlock: The fight is deadlocked. No changes occur this phase.
9–11	Advance: The force advances its position, perhaps literally or in some other way, such as the enemy becoming demoralised or running short of ammunition. DM+1 is applied to further combat resolution checks. This DM is cumulative.
12–14	Victory: The force has gained an obvious advantage that causes the enemy to break off, surrender or otherwise quit the fight. Pockets of resistance may remain and it is possible that not all objectives have been completely achieved.
15+	Total Victory: The force side has overrun or wiped out the enemy, securing objectives in time to prevent the destruction of documents or escape of senior enemies.

The timing of any given phase can vary. It will typically be few minutes in the case of a small firefight but might be several hours if the Travellers' force is involved in a siege. Phase length is normally determined by the size of forces involved but the Referee can modify these timings to suit the situation.

Force Size vs Phase Length

Force Size	Typical Phase Length
Squad	1D minutes
Section	2D minutes
Platoon	2Dx10 minutes
Company	2Dx30 minutes
Battalion	2D hours

These guidelines assume fairly intense but sometimes intermittent combat. A protracted bombardment or long period of skirmishing might result in far longer phases.

RESOLUTION PHASE

At the end of the combat, when one force has broken off or been defeated, it is necessary to resolve the effects of the combat in terms of the strategic situation and the consequences for the mercenary unit. Newcomers to the mercenary trade might be excited about winning the battle but old hands are more interested in fulfilling the contract with a minimum of fuss, casualties and ammunition expenditure. The best commanders always have an eye to the future, ensuring that the price of victory does not impact the unit's long-term viability.

At the end of the engagement, it is necessary to determine the effects on the unit's future readiness and the fate of its members. This takes the form of a Post-Action Assessment (POA). The POA begins with an assessment of the level of casualties incurred by the force. In this context a casualty is anyone requiring medical attention or who is not available for service immediately after the battle. A squad stranded because their vehicle's lifters were damaged are considered casualties, although they need recovering rather than healing. Likewise some troopers who became detached from their unit and got lost are unavailable after the battle but probably unharmed.

A small proportion of casualties are actually dead but since mercenaries generally encounter more danger than regular troops outside a major war, injuries that take a while to heal or which occur repeatedly to the same individuals will wear down the unit over time.

Some casualties are not physical. After a tough engagement there will be some who no longer want to be part of 'the life'. A proportion of these will come around after a short rest; others after an extended furlough. Some will choose to leave the unit or become a liability if they are convinced to stay. Overall, any combat will take its toll.

Immediately after the combat has ended, the amount of casualties taken is determined. If the force is required to fight again immediately, it does so at a reduced force level. If this makes the unit understrength, the Travellers have a choice between reorganising their unit as a smaller force, absorbing some orphaned parts of other formations or accepting a negative DM to resolve combat. In addition, a force ordered straight back into combat after a defeat or breaking off to avoid a worse result suffers DM-2 on checks to resolve combat.

The level of casualties taken depends on the terrain and the tactics of the opposing forces. These produce a DM which is applied to the check for casualties taken (see page 88). Further modifiers for protracted combat – actions that take longer than one phase to resolve can take the casualty percentage above 100%. This is because most casualties are not actually dead but longer battles mean not only more casualties but also greater difficulty in recovering the wounded, which can lead to people who would otherwise have survived being lost.

To determine the level of casualties taken in a battle, the unit's leaders must make an Average (8+) Medic check using the appropriate DEI or CEI. The Effect of this check is added to the result of a 2D roll on the Casualty Percentage table, with DM-1 per phase the combat took to resolve. Percentages are based on the unit's manning level at the beginning of the combat but for simplicity the standard staffing level of the unit type can be used instead.

Some combat situations or environments have implications for casualty determination. See page 94 for details.

Casualties are applied as a percentage of the deployed force. However, only a very small proportion of these casualties are actually dead. In the case of equipment-heavy formations, 'casualties' represent a mix of busted equipment and injured people.

- Roughly 1/3 of the casualties taken are 'slight' and can continue with their duties if necessary. This represents personnel who were shocked, cut off from their force, trapped somewhere or not wounded as badly as they thought. It will take roughly 2D hours to assess and locate these personnel or to direct them back to their units.
- Roughly 1/3 of the casualties taken are 'minor' and require a period of recuperation, perhaps with some light duty. These personnel are unavailable for 2D days on average, after which they can return to duty.
- Roughly 1/3 of the casualties taken are 'serious or fatal'. These are further subdivided: 1/3 are dead, 1/3 require emergency life-saving measures and may require long-term treatment and 1/3 require 8D days of medical care (about a month on average) before they can return to duty.

For non-Traveller units it is often sufficient to take the casualty percentage total and roughly divide it into thirds but for the Travellers it may be important to know exactly how many personnel were injured and to what degree.

Example

An infantry company with a strength of 150 personnel suffers casualties and gets a result of 11 on the Casualty Percentage table. This represents 2D% Slight casualties, 1D% Minor casualties and 1D% Serious or Fatal casualties. This is determined as 7% Slight (10.5, rounded to 11), 5% Minor (7.5, rounded to 8) and 3% Serious or Fatal (4.5, rounded to 5).

This means that immediately after the combat is over it is down 24 personnel. The force now has 126 effectives available if it must immediately fight again.

Casualty Percentage

Result	Slight Casualty	Minor Casualty	Serious/Fatal Casualty	Casualty Total
0 or less	5D%	5D%	5D%	15D%
1	5D%	5D%	4D%	14D%
2	5D%	4D%	4D%	13D%
3	4D%	4D%	4D%	12D%
4	4D%	4D%	3D%	11D%
5	4D%	3D%	3D%	10D%
6	3D%	3D%	3D%	9D%
7	3D%	3D%	2D%	8D%
8	3D%	2D%	2D%	7D%
9	2D%	2D%	2D%	6D%
10	2D%	2D%	1D%	5D%
11	2D%	1D%	1D%	4D%
12	1D%	1D%	1D%	3D%
13	1D%	1D3%	1D3%	2D%
14	1D3%	1D3%	0	1D%
15 or more	1D3%	0	0	1D3%

Over the next 5 hours (determined on 2D), 11 of these personnel are found and directed back to their unit. Some had minor wounds, some were lost or so fatigued they just crawled off somewhere to sleep. A couple were shocked by their first combat experience and had to seriously think about their future with the unit but decided they would carry on. At the end of this time the unit is back up to 137 effectives. Some personnel are shaky, some are carrying minor injuries but the force is combat-capable if necessary.

Another 8 personnel dribble back to the unit over the next 12 days. Some get patched up and head back straight away, some need time to heal and a couple milk their relatively minor injuries for medically-mandated time off. The unit is back up to 145 personnel at the end of this time.

Of the 5 'serious or fatal' casualties two are dead and another requires long-term rehabilitation. The other two will need major medical assistance away from the combat – one for psychological issues and the other for physical injuries. The effect on the unit is the same whatever sort of injury is sustained. These two require 8D days of medical care before being able to report for light duty.

Damage to equipment is assessed on a similar basis. A grav armour battalion that has suffered 12% casualties has 12% of its vehicles unavailable at the end of the engagement and an equivalent proportion of its personnel injured. Using a quick division into thirds this translates to about 4% of the vehicles crippled, 4% seriously damaged and 4% misplaced or easily returned to action. If the battalion has around 75 vehicles all told, this is 3 vehicles in each category. Thus 3 are returned to combat worthiness (and available to the unit) within a few hours, a few more within a few days, and only one is completely trashed. The other two will require a lot of workshop time but can be fixed.

Casualty and Equipment Loss Levels

15% casualties, even most of them are relatively slight, is a lot of personnel out of action. Over time, a casualty rate as low as 1–2% can drain a unit of experienced personnel. Wise commanders ensure casualties are kept to a minimum in a fight and well looked after afterward. The same goes for equipment. The loss levels given above assume the force has a suitable opportunity to collect wounded and to remove damaged equipment for repair. If the unit was forced to retreat, casualty levels are increased and even more so if it was routed. A vigorous pursuit after an enemy retreats will also increase their casualties, although friendly casualties may also be higher and there is a chance of running into an ambush. See Post-Battle Pursuit on page 102.

In addition to these factors, casualties and equipment losses can be reduced by effective procedures and support formations. Note that these are opportunities for roleplaying and adventures spun out of the battle aftermath.

Reducing Casualties

To reduce casualties, the leaders of a unit must make a CEI check using the force's Support score. If a specialist medical unit is available or the force has a specialist medical sub-unit, the Support of this formation can be used instead. The Effect of this check is added to a 2D roll on the Casualty and Equipment Loss Reduction table.

Reducing Equipment Losses

To reduce losses of vehicles, artillery and similar large pieces of hardware, the leaders of a unit must make a CEI check using the force's Support value. If a specialist recovery or technical repair unit is available or the force has a specialist sub-unit of the right type, the Support value of this formation can be used instead. The Effect of this check is added to a 2D roll on the Casualty and Equipment Loss Reduction table.

Casualty and Equipment Loss Reduction

2D + Effect	Reduction
0	No Reduction. In addition, a Mishap (see page 72) occurs
1–2	No Reduction. In addition, an Incident (see page 75) occurs
3–5	1D of losses are downgraded, an Incident (see page 75) occurs
6–8	2D of losses are downgraded
9–11	3D of losses are downgraded
12–15	4D of losses are downgraded
15+	5D of losses are downgraded

Loss reduction is done by 'downgrading' the losses. Each 1D of downgraded casualties can be applied to the table Casualty Percentage table separately and allows 1D% of casualties to be effectively moved to the next column to the left. Thus a force that has nominally lost 3D/3D/2D but can downgrade 3D of casualties might choose to modify 2D of 'serious or fatal' casualties to Minor and 1D of Minor casualties to Slight. The end result is a loss of 4D% Slight, 4D% Minor and no Serious or Fatal casualties.

CHAPTER - ELEVEN

TACTICS

For quick resolution of a minor action, it can be useful to assume that both sides use suitable tactics for their force and mission, and that tactical decisions cancel one another out. Full resolution requires the consideration of tactical decisions on either side. There are two factors at play here; the force's level of aggression and the actual tactics used.

LEVEL OF AGGRESSION

Fortune sometimes does indeed favour the bold... and on other occasions they charge straight into a minefield or concealed heavy defences. Sometimes a force simply cannot afford to take casualties and must operate with great caution but then again going in hard can sometimes overwhelm an opponent before they can put up any meaningful resistance. Thus the decision of how aggressive to be is not a simple one.

There are five levels of aggression, each suited to different situations. As a rule, highly aggressive actions tends to produce more decisive results but also more casualties than cautious ones. The possible levels of aggression are: Reckless, Aggressive, Bold, Cautious and Timid. All levels of aggression can be used with any tactic.

Aggression levels must be chosen before surprise is determined.

Reckless

A Reckless attack or defence heedless of casualties offers the possibility of a quick and decisive victory, at the price of increased casualties. It also maximises the unit's advantages in terms of surprise and superior Tech Level. A Reckless battle plan cannot be changed after final reconnaissance, although it can be aborted at the last moment. If the Travellers choose to do this there is a chance that some units will be compromised. The force breaks off and automatically loses the battle or gives up its positions. In addition, a Routine (6+) Tactics check is made and the Effect is applied to a check to determine the level of casualties taken in the frantic abort-and-retire operation. The opposing force takes no significant casualties in this situation.

A force behaving in a Reckless manner may actually have prepared carefully and managed the risks but when the time comes it is fully committed. A force attacking recklessly will charge headlong at the enemy, relying on firepower and speed to overrun their positions. There is no time for changes of plan or detailed orders in a Reckless attack, and if the timetable becomes dislocated the operation can be a disaster. However, a successful Reckless attack will shock the enemy and may be complete before resistance begins to firm up. A Reckless defence implies 'die in place' orders, with units holding their positions to the last or launching headlong counterattacks rather than retreat.

Reckless battle plans are prone to planning and command and control problems. For this reason the commander must make a Difficult (10+) Tactics check at the beginning of the action. If this is failed, twice the negative effect is applied as a DM on the resolution of the combat and also to determine casualties at the end. If the check is successful, no DM is applied.

In addition, other DMs are generated by a Reckless attack.

- A Reckless attack that achieves surprise of any form triples the DM for surprise.
- Reckless attacks also triple the force's Tech Level DM.
- When determining casualties for a force using a Reckless level of aggression, DM-2 applies to the casualty resolution check. If the Tactics check at the beginning of the battle was failed, twice any negative Effect is also applied to casualty resolution.

A Reckless battle plan cannot be stopped no matter how badly wrong it is going. The unit will attack or cling to its positions until it is soundly defeated, battering itself to pieces in desperate counterattacks to recapture lost strongpoints or remaining under artillery fire to the bitter end. If it is over quickly the force may win a spectacular victory but a slugging match will be extremely costly and may result in the collapse of the unit even if victory is attained.

If the resolution of the first phase of combat is Advance, this is upgraded to Victory and if the result is Victory this is upgraded to Total Victory. Other results are left as they stand.

Aggressive

An Aggressive battleplan increases the advantages offered by surprise and tech level but retains a measure of control in case something goes wrong. Advantages and risks are smaller than those associated with a Reckless battle plan. An Aggressive battle plan can be changed after final reconnaissance but this risks dislocation and needless casualties. The Travellers must make an Average (8+) Tactics check. If this is failed the Effect is applied to all checks to resolve the combat and also to determine casualties at the end. Alternatively the Travellers may choose to abort the operation and withdraw. Neither side takes significant casualties in this situation.

Aggressive battle plans can go awry faster than the commander can react. For this reason the commander must make an Average (8+) Tactics check at the beginning of the action. If this is failed, any negative Effect is applied as a DM on the resolution of the combat and also to determine casualties at the end. If the check is successful, no DM is applied. In addition, other DMs are generated by an Aggressive attack.

- An Aggressive attack that achieves surprise of any form doubles the DM for surprise.
- Aggressive attacks also double the force's Tech Level DM.
- If the Tactics check at the beginning of the battle was failed, any negative Effect is also applied to casualty resolution.

An Aggressive battle plan can be aborted after 1D phases if the commander so chooses. See Breaking Off on page 101. Aggressive troops are likely to be so heavily engaged that they have trouble disengaging even if they get the order to do so but unlike a Reckless force it is possible.

If the resolution of the first phase of combat is Victory this is upgraded to Total Victory. Other results are left as they stand.

Bold

A Bold battleplan balances risk-management with potential benefits. A Bold battle plan can be changed after final reconnaissance with relatively little risk. The Travellers must make a Routine (6+) Tactics check. If this is failed the Effect is applied to all checks to resolve the combat but not to determine casualties at the end. Alternatively the Travellers may choose to abort the operation and withdraw. Neither side takes significant casualties in this situation.

A Bold battle plan plays to the unit's strengths. Any DM for its relevant CBAS characteristic is doubled. No other DMs are generated by this level of aggression.

Bold battle plans incorporate cut-outs to allow the plan to be revised or the operation to be aborted. The commander of a Bold force may choose to break off after D3 phases. See Breaking Off on page 101.

Cautious

A Cautious battleplan is more about avoiding casualties than exploiting opportunities. A Cautious commander may abort the operation or change their tactic after final reconnaissance without any risk. No additional DMs are generated by this level of aggression.

The commander of a Cautious force may choose to break off at any time after the first phase. See Breaking Off on page 101.

Timid

A Timid battleplan is normally associated with feints, reconnaissance missions and situations where it is useful to look like the force intends to fight. This might be a token defence 'for the honour of the flag' or diplomatic reasons, or a deception to make the enemy think an objective is held in force. Once the real situation becomes apparent, the defenders will be ready to pull out. A Timid operation might also be mounted in order to draw a pursuing enemy into an ambush.

A Timid commander may abort the operation or change their tactic after final reconnaissance without any risk. No additional DMs are generated by this level of aggression.

The commander of a Timid force must break off as soon as a result of Setback or worse occurs, and may choose to break off in any phase. If the withdrawal was forced by a setback, the Timid force may suffer worse than usual from a pursuit than usual. See Breaking Off on page 101.

COMBAT SITUATIONS

Combat situations can be generalised into five types: Attack, Raid, Encounter, Ambush and Siege. The nature of each dictates many of the options available to commanders. In some situations it is not possible to gather intelligence before beginning a battle and some tactics are incompatible with the circumstances. The type of combat situation will indicate to the Referee what the outcome represents.

Attack

An Attack occurs when the offensive force seeks to destroy the enemy or drive them from an objective and to gain control of that objective. Typically an Attack is made at a time of the commander's choosing, although circumstances may force one to be made at an inopportune time. For example, a mercenary commander may be under pressure from the client to attack immediately despite the odds being likely to be better at a later time. Almost any tactic can be used by a force making an attack, although obviously defence is not appropriate and skirmishing may not be.

A force that makes a successful Attack forces its opponents to retreat from their positions and may occupy them or pursue. DM-3 is imposed on the casualty determination check for the losing side and DM-1 on the winning side, in addition to the results of a pursuit.

Raid

A Raid occurs when the offensive force tries to attain some objective against resistance but does not intend to retain control of the battle area. Examples include a reconnaissance in force, a hostage-rescue or personnel snatch mission and possibly an artillery bombardment with no immediate follow-up. A Raid might be launched purely to harass or inflict casualties on an enemy but more commonly will have a specific objective such as the destruction of a supply stockpile.

A force that successfully completes a Raid destroys its target or escapes with it but does not force the enemy out of their positions. Raids do not impose DMs on the casualty determination check.

Encounter

An Encounter occurs when two forces are on the move. Either or both may be unaware of the other's presence and mutual surprise is possible. Alternatively, when reconnaissance or skirmishing forces are sent into an area they may encounter one another. An advance-to-contact situation may result in an Encounter rather than an Attack or Raid if the enemy is not met where the plan indicated they would be.

In an encounter situation the advantage is generally with the side that becomes aware of the other first, and with the most mobile formation. A check should be made to determine if either force becomes aware of the other in time to make a meaningful plan. This is dealt with in the Preparation phase, on page 82. If both sides blunder into one another, both are subject to tactical surprise (see page 83), which might be worse for one force than the other.

In an Encounter situation the side with the highest Mobility DM gains DM+1 on all combat resolution checks and if only one side becomes aware of the other in time to make a plan, that side gains an additional DM +1.

Ambush

An Ambush occurs only when one force is unaware of another, which has had time to prepare. As the moving force approaches the ambush site, the normal check is made to determine if each becomes aware of the other. The ambushing force may be generally aware of the approaching enemy but still needs to check in case the arrival is not quite as planned. If an ambushing force is aware of the enemy and they are unaware, the ambushers gain DM+6 on their combat resolution check in the first phase, dropping to +4 then +2 in the subsequent phases. If the Travellers are the ones being ambushed this is translated to –6/–4/–2. If the ambushers are not aware of the approaching enemy but are still in prepared ambush positions the DM is halved to +3/+2/+1.

Siege

A Siege occurs where two forces are in proximity and aware of one another and significant defences or terrain obstacles are in place for at least one side. The reduction of a heavily defended city is a classic example of siege warfare, as is a period of trench warfare. Sieges can be on a large or small scale; a mercenary company that is forced to take cover in buildings and becomes surrounded could be said to be in a siege situation.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to achieve surprise in a siege situation. Bursting out of an unexpected exit or launching an attack whose build-up was not detected, can achieve tactical surprise. DM-2 applies on all attempts to achieve surprise in a siege situation.

Often a successful combat will not end a siege but will alter the strategic situation. For example, the Travellers might launch an attack to clear a section of the enemy's defences, forcing them to fall back to a weaker position or lose the use of a critical road. A large-scale siege will usually require several combat operations to resolve, whereas the situation where a small unit is cornered will usually be over in one decisive action.

TACTICS

The tactics used by a commander can have huge implications for the level of casualties as well as the success of any missions undertaken. Some tactics are only viable with certain forces; others are unsuited to terrain or circumstances.

Direct Attack

The Direct Attack tactic is straightforward and can be used in almost any situation. A direct attack makes use of covering fire, concealment and all the usual low-level tactics practiced by military forces. It is a predictable gambit, offering no special advantages. A Direct Attack can be made at any level of aggression but very timid attacks are unlikely to succeed.

Close Assault

The Close Assault tactic is essentially a more aggressive version of Direct Attack. The attacking force wants to close as quickly as possible with the enemy and bring about a point-blank engagement. This is risky and will result in higher casualties than a normal attack. A Close Assault can be made in a Bold, Aggressive or Reckless manner. When determining the outcome of a Close Assault, any DM for surprise is doubled. The attacker must succeed in a Mobility Check to get into contact with the enemy. This is automatic if the enemy has chosen a Static Defence tactic. Otherwise, a failed Mobility Check imposes its Effect on the combat resolution check and the check to determine casualties. If the attacking force manages to bring about a close action its Combat characteristic is considered to be doubled… but so is that of the enemy force. Thus this tactic is best used by fast-moving, high-firepower forces.

Flank

The Flank tactic requires the attacking force to find a vulnerable point and exploit it with a rapid manoeuvre. A force that has chosen to Flank may make a Mobility check and add the Effect to all checks to resolve the combat. However, if a force is trying to Flank and is counterattacked (with a Direct Attack, Close Assault or Flank tactic) the advantage is lost and a fluid and confused action is likely to ensue. If the counterattacking force succeeds on a Mobility Check it hits the flanking force at the perfect moment and gains DM+3 on all checks to resolve the combat. If this check is failed the counterattacking force still gains DM+1 and the flanking force loses the benefits from the manoeuvre.

Vertical Envelopment

The Vertical Envelopment tactic is a variation of the Flank tactic but using air or grav mobility – or a direct assault by troops dropping from orbit. In the latter case, known as a meteoric assault, the attackers automatically reach their target unless they are stopped by aerospace defences. When a Vertical Envelopment is carried out by air or grav vehicles, a successful Mobility check is required to reach the target unless it is using the Static Defence tactic. Any DM from surprise – of any kind – is tripled when making a vertical envelopment.

Active Defence

The Active Defence tactic assumes that the defending force is prepared to make spoiling attacks and to transfer forces around the defended area. It may even launch counterattacks against forces moving up to make an attack but will return to its defended zone rather than exploiting successes. The defending force gains the advantage of any defensive fortifications (see page 95). In addition the defending commander may make an Average (8+) Tactics check each phase and impose the Effect of this check as a negative DM on the attacker's check to resolve combat.

Static Defence

The Static Defence tactic is normally used by slow-moving forces or those with immobile equipment. The defending force sticks to its positions or stands its ground and takes full advantage of any cover or fortifications it has. In addition to any fortifications, the attacking force suffers DM-2 when resolving any form of static position providing the defending force has had time to find cover. In the event that an artillery or support formation is attacked it will default to Static Defence unless sufficient warning is available that the unit's security element can put some other tactic into operation.

Elastic Defence

The Elastic Defence tactic is normally used by highly mobile forces. A force using an elastic defence will retreat or move in the face of an attack, allowing the main enemy thrust to strike empty air. This is followed by a series of counterattacks or manoeuvres and perhaps bombardment of likely enemy objectives to wear down and disrupt their forces. A force conducting an Elastic Defence may make a Manoeuvre Check. If successful DM+2 is obtained or DM-2 applied to the opposition's check to resolve combat. A force using Elastic Defence gains DM+1 to break off from combat.

Skirmish

The Skirmish tactic is sometimes used to keep the enemy off balance and unsure of a commander's intentions or to contest an area of terrain without holding it in force. It may also be used by reconnaissance forces. Reckless and Aggressive skirmishing is not appropriate, since the whole point of this tactic is to avoid becoming entangled in a decisive action. A force using Skirmish gains DM+3 to break off from combat.

Ambush

The Ambush tactic is used when a force intends to attack enemies passing a concealed position. Ambushes are detailed on the previous page.

Bombard

The Bombard tactic is used by units with long-range weapons such as artillery or aerospace defence formations and also by fast-moving aerospace or grav vehicles. A unit using Bombard cannot lose a battle if the enemy cannot engage it. Any negative result beyond 'setback' is considered to mean the bombardment was ineffective but will not harm the bombarding unit. In a situation where the enemy can engage in counter-battery fire, the bombardment battle is resolved normally, using Artillery rather than Combat, and it is possible to be soundly defeated. If an artillery formation is directly attacked, it will switch to a defensive tactic if aware of the incoming force. If not, it will default to Static Defence. In either case the artillery unit's Combat is used rather than its Artillery or Aerospace characteristic.

CHAPTER - TWELVE

ENVIRONMENT

The environment, in the sense of general conditions, terrain and weather, is important in almost all forms of combat. Grav vehicles can theoretically ignore the ground below but in practice they are still influenced by it. Terrain will conceal enemy forces and provide cover for them, so must be considered even when fighting at high altitude. Tall terrain features can also provide cover for approaching grav or aerospace vehicles and may have atmospheric eddies around them that can disrupt flight or targeting. As a general rule grav tanks and other flight-capable vehicles hug the ground and take advantage of terrain features. Those intended to do so usually have top-mounted weapons similar to the turrets of tracked or wheeled vehicles. Those intended to fly above the terrain may have their weapons mounted on the sides or underneath the main body. There are advantages to both systems and a skilled commander knows how to maximise them.

Weather can affect military operations, although as a general rule its effects are more pronounced on lower-tech forces. A properly equipped military force uses its Tech Level modifier as a DM to offset the effects of bad weather. This in part reflects better sensors but also general equipment. Boots and uniforms of more advanced materials will keep soldiers dry and warm in conditions where low-tech forces are driven into shelter. For this reason a negative Tech Level modifier exacerbates the effect of bad weather.

‘Properly equipped’ in this context means the unit has been supplied with uniforms, outer clothing and general equipment of the same tech level as its weapons. A force armed with TL15 small arms but dressed in civilian clothes is not considered properly equipped in this context. Equipment levels are dealt with on page 28 of Book 2.

When a force is operating in a generally habitable environment there will be minor variations in the weather, which have only minor significance. A bit of intermittent rain or mist is an occupational hazard for military personnel and can be discounted most of the time. Only when conditions become seriously difficult do they affect combat operations. Most of the time a force using a defensive tactic will be less affected by bad weather conditions, so modifiers work in the favour of defenders. If both forces are on the move, such as in an encounter battle or mutual skirmishing they will be equally affected. However, if one side is equipped at a sufficiently high tech level that they have a better Tech Level DM than their opponents they gain the advantage of this disparity in addition to their usual Tech Level advantage.

Example

A TL10 mercenary unit is skirmishing in thick fog with a TL8 local force. The mercenaries’ Tech Level DM is factored in as normal during combat resolution but they gain an additional advantage due to their sensors and communications gear – or to put that another way their opponents are hampered far more than they are. Both forces suffer DM-2 in thick fog, which would normally cancel out. However, the mercenaries have a +1 Tech Level modifier, which gives them a net DM-1 for the conditions. In situations where the advantage is relevant – such as gaining surprise or resolving combat – the mercenaries can apply the difference between their environmental DM and that of the opponents as an additional DM+1. If it is the locals who are checking under these conditions, they suffer a net DM-1. If both must make a check they use their own DM, which is –2 for the locals and –1 for the mercenaries.

POOR CONDITIONS

Poor conditions refers to any combination of bad visibility, cold, heat or generally miserable conditions such as heavy rain or freezing fog, which might make soldiers more concerned with getting warm and dry than keeping alert. Poor conditions impose a DM ranging from –1 to –3 depending on severity. This is based on an estimate of the overall ‘poorness’ of the combat environment so may be the result of multiple minor factors or due to a single over-riding consideration. If multiple factors apply the Referee may decide they add up to the next level of difficulty on the Poor Combat Conditions table.

For example, a force that encounters moderate cold rain on a low-gravity world is going to have a miserable time of it but will ultimately face only Mildly Poor conditions. If they were trying to fight in waist-deep half-frozen water in an arctic wilderness, with snowfall so thick that visibility was restricted to just a few metres, the force could be said to have encountered Severely Poor conditions despite no one factor that category applying. They might also be justified in requesting a pay rise.

Poor Combat Conditions

	Condition	Examples
Mildly Poor (DM-1)	Impaired visibility	Moderate rain, cold mist
	Discomfort	Hot and dusty
	Impaired mobility	Low gravity (0.3–0.7g), rough terrain with sharp rocks, operating in waist-deep water
Very Poor (DM-2)	Bad Visibility	Heavy rain, strong gusty wind, thick fog
	Major Discomfort	Very cold, on a level equivalent to the worst temperate winters
	Seriously Impaired Mobility	Very low gravity (0.1–0.3g), very difficult or hazardous terrain, operating in deep water
Severely Poor (DM-4)	Difficult to function	Air so thin it is barely breathable, arctic level cold, hurricane-force winds
	Specialist Conditions	Extremely low gravity, microgravity, underwater

Poor conditions will not always affect the engaged forces. A race adapted to the thin air and dust of their homeworld will not suffer penalties for fighting there but their opponents will. Similarly, a force trained to fight in microgravity will not suffer the usual penalty for this environment.

ATMOSPHERE AND VACUUM

Soldiers cannot fight if they cannot breathe. An atmosphere that is a little difficult, such as one with a mild taint or that is just too thin is considered to be ‘very poor conditions’ and subject to the usual DM-2 for such a situation. Anyone fighting in an environment where it is very difficult to breathe or the atmosphere is causing mild harm – such as a bad taint or a smoke-filled building – is experiencing severely poor conditions and suffers DM-4 as usual.

Inimical atmospheric conditions do not in and of themselves impose DMs to alter combat resolution, although if there are factors that would constitute poor conditions these will apply. For example, if the Travellers are fighting in a swirling acidic mist that makes it hard to see their targets they will suffer DM-1 for mildly poor conditions but the acidic nature of the mist is instead factored into casualty determination.

- Mildly inimical conditions such as very low air pressure or slightly toxic surroundings increase casualties by +1 per dice. Thus if a unit takes 3D slight casualties this is increased to 3D+3.
- Highly inimical conditions such as hard vacuum increase casualties by +2 per dice.
- Severely inimical conditions such as acid vapour increase casualties by +4 per dice.

This assumes the forces involved have protective equipment that allows them to function in this environment at all. Anyone without a vacc suit in a vacuum environment will be too busy dying to harm anyone else and those with vacc suits will be able to fight as normal. However, those whose suits are penetrated or damaged will be in serious danger, which accounts for the additional casualties.

FORTIFICATIONS

The use of cover and concealment, as well as obscurants such as smoke, are sufficiently commonplace that they can be represented as part of a unit’s Combat characteristic. However, in some circumstances a force can benefit from fortifications and defences. Fortifications range from hasty improvements of terrain features to interlocking bunker complexes. There are six levels of fortification.

To benefit from fortifications a unit must be using a defensive tactic – Active, Static or Elastic. The techniques in use can vary, from a simplistic holding of all points until they are captured or destroyed to using obstructions and strongpoints as pivots to manoeuvre upon. The DM for a fortification is applied positively if the defending unit is making a check to resolve combat and negatively if it is attacking.

Fortifications can be reduced by protracted bombardment with suitable weapons or otherwise cleared. If this is the case their DM will be reduced by a successful attack. Once the DM reaches +0 the fortification will usually be converted into a sea of rubble which may impede movement but not provide any real protection.

Improvised

Improvised fortifications typically take the form of shallow trenches or scrapes, barricades of household furniture or vehicles and rubble quickly pushed up to create a breastwork. Improvised fortifications provide a starting DM+2 or –2. A unit can improvise a defensive position for itself in 1D hours or half that time if the fortifications need face only one possible direction of attack.

Prepared

Prepared fortifications typically include trenches with a grenade sump and some kind of top cover or positions built out of sandbags and rubble. Obstacles such as pits or barbed wire may be used to impede or channel an approaching force and fields of fire will usually be cleared. Prepared positions provide DM+4 or –4 and can be set up in 3D hours or half that if they position needs to face only one direction.

Strong

Strong fortifications are the best that can be produced without undertaking some form of construction work. Interlocking trenches and rifle pits fronted with obstacles, with carefully sited support weapons, are the minimum required to create a strong position. Commonly mines or traps of some kind are sited to protect the approaches to the position. A unit can create a strong position in 6D hours of work or half that if the position is to face only one way. The starting DM for strong fortifications is +/–6.

Constructed

Constructed fortifications make use of building materials such as concrete, typically using a mix of digging in and construction to create a bunker complex or fort. Constructed fortifications may be quite basic, consisting of just a few concrete bunkers but as technology advances it is common to build in powered traverse mountings for heavy weapons, communications equipment and sensor networks. Constructed fortifications cannot be thrown together in the face of the enemy. See page 111 for information on constructing a suitable position. Constructed fortifications provide a DM equal to +/–8 in undamaged condition.

Fortress

A fortress is simply a large and powerful version of a constructed position, usually with heavy weapons and defences against aerospace attack built into a detailed scheme. A fortress may use advanced high-tech materials and will contain well-protected electrical and electronic systems. Fortress level fortifications provide a DM equal to +/–10 in undamaged condition.

Citadel

The term ‘citadel’ is used for the most impressive and heavily defended fortifications. Typically a citadel will house the world’s primary aerospace defence weapons and their control systems or act as a refuge for the government in a time of crisis. A citadel will typically be deep underground, although grav-supported structures are sometimes used instead. This allows the defence nexus to be moved away from a threat, trading mobility for the security of deep rock and earth. A citadel provides a DM equal to +/–12.

Fighting in a Fortress

The scale of an action will often dictate what role fortifications play in the resolution of a combat. At higher levels the Travellers might be committing a brigade of troops against a fortress or citadel, in which case the whole fortification DM is used against their check to resolve the combat. However, it is often possible to zoom in the focus to an attack or raid upon part of the fortification. In this case, small units may be able to infiltrate part of the fortified area and bypass part of the defences. The big artillery weapons of the fortress are not relevant to a fight revolving around a section of commandos trying to disable the main control centre, so the huge defensive bonus of the fortification can largely be ignored.

Thus major fortifications are more likely to be plot drivers than the objective of a combat, unless the Travellers are commanding a very large force. It may be that the Travellers’ mission is to disable the big guns so that a large-scale assault can succeed or to remove the threat of missile attack on starships evacuating people from the nearby starport. The Referee must judge what proportion of the fortification DM applies to the present situation.

OBSTACLES AND CONCEALMENT

Obstacles can be included as part of a fortification but sometimes are used to limit enemy mobility rather than directly enhancing defence. A hostile force that must struggle through a set of obstacles to reach its target is likely to take heavier casualties than one that can approach quickly but the advent of grav mobility renders such measures far less valuable.

Obstacles range from pits and wire to large solid obstructions and may not be obvious for what they are. Obstacles such as ‘dragon’s teeth’ are obviously intended to prevent ground vehicles from approaching, as are deep concrete-lined ditches. However, these are rarely constructed unless conflict is expected or a purely military site is to be secured. Clever city design can approximate the functions of these devices without being obvious.

One option is to construct concealed or retractable obstructions such as metal bollards that retreat into the ground when not in use. Alternatively, obstructions can be apparently decorative or even functional design features. For example, the architecture of some cities includes tall spires or sweeping dome shapes with no places a grav vehicle can land. Such features are designed to prevent a vertical envelopment of important structures or an enemy force establishing observation and fire positions in high locations. Spiky, jagged architecture is sometimes used to deter or impair a meteoric assault, making it extremely hazardous to drop troops directly into a city from orbit.

Obstacles impose a DM on a unit's mobility and any attempt to obtain surprise by speed or stealth. They are rated at five levels of impediment, from Light to Impassable. Each level imposes a DM on units affected by the obstacles, which typically means those operating at ground level. The Referee must decide whether the DM applies or if there are other tactical considerations. For example, grav vehicles can simply fly over cluttered terrain but are forced to operate a little higher above the ground, which might make them more vulnerable to ground-based weapons.

Light
Most urban terrain is considered to contain light obstacles unless it has been deliberately constructed to be as open as possible. Light forest or scrubland, or somewhere with many large boulders, would be considered littered with light obstacles. This kind or terrain imposes DM-2 on Mobility checks and attempts to gain surprise by a rapid approach for all units operating at ground level.

Impeded
Impeded terrain can be natural, such as a dense boulder field or a forest, or might be created deliberately with military obstacles, wrecked vehicles or clever architecture. It is possible to create Impeded terrain without making it obvious. This level of obstruction imposes DM-4 on Mobility checks and attempts to gain surprise by speed of advance.

Cluttered
Cluttered terrain can occur in jungle or similar natural environments or can be artificially created. If that is the case, the area will either be an obvious military obstruction or will look like a disaster zone. Cluttered terrain imposes DM-6 on Mobility checks for personnel and small vehicles such as motorcycles but can only be navigated slowly and with great care by vehicles.

Highly Cluttered
Highly cluttered terrain occurs in dense jungle or a deliberately constructed obstacle maze. People on foot can slip carefully through but vehicles can only pass by clearing obstacles. A bulldozer or similar vehicle might be able to get through but most will become stuck in short order. Highly cluttered terrain imposes DM-8 on those forms of transport that can get through at all.

Impassable
Impassable terrain is just that, unless obstacles are carefully cleared as the force proceeds. An example would be tremendously dense forest where a path must be cut with machetes. Vehicles cannot operate in such terrain and even clearance with engineering vehicles risks getting stuck. Impassable terrain imposes DM-10 on those forms of transport than can get through at all.

The effects of cluttered terrain can be useful from a tactical perspective. Creating an area the enemy cannot move their tanks through may allow defences to be concentrated elsewhere or could be used to channel an attack. Alternatively the area could be a killing zone covered by heavy weapons. Forces might become trapped against such terrain, although the Referee should keep in mind that locals who know the land might have pre-prepared routes through otherwise impossible terrain.

The effects of terrain are open to some interpretation. For example, if the Travellers want to gain surprise by way of rapid advance to the target, extremely cluttered terrain will make this difficult. On the other hand, the same terrain provides concealment so a stealthy approach may be facilitated. In such situations the Mobility DM can be treated as a positive DM to attempts to avoid detection and thereby gain surprise or as a negative DM on attempts to spot the infiltrators. Wise commanders use obstacles that do not hugely impair detection of intruders or build in open zones that must be crossed without cover.

RATING TERRAIN
The twin concepts of mobility impairment and defensive advantage can be used to rate almost any form of terrain. For example, an area of a TL9 city might be considered to be impeded terrain in terms of mobility and sighting, and allows an improvised position to be thrown together quickly in almost any location. It is not necessary to provide specific ratings for every conceivable type of terrain when the situation can be described with these concepts.

CHAPTER - THIRTEEN

DETAILED RESOLUTION

The degree of detail in which a situation is resolved is always up to the Referee. An entire mission can be resolved with a quick ECEI check if this is appropriate and a battle can be resolved just as quickly by use of the combat resolution system. At the other end of the scale it is possible to play out an entire ticket using the standard *Traveller* rules, resolving combats on an individual scale and deciding who won by looking at who is left standing and in possession of the objective.

Somewhere in between the two lies the possibility for detailed resolution of operations and missions by expanding parts of the situation and playing them out in closer focus than a simple abstraction but retaining primary interest in the large-scale outcome. As always, the resolution of a situation is subject to Referee interpretation; these rules tell the Referee what has happened but not necessarily the details. If those matter, they can be extrapolated from the outcome.

Actual combat between two forces is still resolved using the system presented on page 72, and most circumstances can be resolved as an operation using ECEI or a relevant CBAS characteristic. It is always possible for the Referee to adjudicate and narrate rather than rolling dice, especially if an event is important to the campaign storyline. Alternatively, many activities can be resolved at a moderate level of detail that allows the Travellers to have multiple mini-adventures or to move back up to full abstract resolution. Most such actions are carried out in support of a mission, in preparation for a battle or after one.

Many of these situations give advantages to a mercenary force that does well and vice versa. It may be that the Travellers want to use some of these rules but only when it is likely to benefit them. The Referee is the final arbiter in such matters and there is always the chance of an unpleasant surprise if the enemy turns out to be better prepared than the Travellers thought. Once committed to a resolution in more detail the Travellers must live with the results.

APPROACH AND INFILTRATION

Approaching a target is always a critical moment. Often the approach is straightforward, such as when a strike force forms up in its base and flies at speed to the target in grav vehicles or when a large-scale attack is prepared behind friendly lines. A force making an approach in this manner might be intercepted or engaged with whatever weapons will bear; such things are a fact of life in the mercenary trade. On other

occasions it may be possible to sneak close to the target before attacking. In either case the approach is divided into three zones:

Immediate: The Immediate area around the target is considered to be the zone in which the mercenaries can attack with small arms and move into the target on foot within a few seconds.

Short: The Short area is the zone around the target where foot patrols are likely and where support weapons such as mortars and grenade launchers can attack the target – and vice versa. A sniper or observation team supporting an operation will need to establish itself in the Short area, either undetected or in a situation where it cannot easily be dislodged by the enemy.

Remote: The Remote area is of nebulous size, starting outside support weapon range and extending several kilometres at least. A force in the Remote area can be targeted by artillery and similar long-range weapons located at the target.

It is necessary to pass through the Remote and Short zones to reach the Immediate target area. A combat approach, in which the mercenaries advance to combat and fight their way onto the objective, can be assumed to be part of a combat resolution check under most circumstances. However, there are occasions where the approach is important, such as when a stealthy infiltration of the target is attempted but fails. If a combat approach is required, the attacking force must make a Mobility check. The difficulty of this check is normally Average (8+) for an enemy force with adequate weaponry.

The Effect of this check is applied to the casualty determination roll at the end of the mission and as a DM to combat resolution. A fast approach with good covering fire can reduce casualties and increase the chances of success but there is always the chance enemy defences may be heavier or more alert than expected. If so, the Referee can increase the difficulty of the Mobility check. A poorly defended target might have a reduced Mobility check difficulty.

Sometimes the Travellers will want to sneak close to their target before launching the attack. When this is the case, the Infiltration phase of the operation becomes extremely important. Infiltration is normally carried out by either stealth or deception. In some cases this can be very simple. If the enemy has a much lower level of technology available, it is usually possible to use low-flying grav vehicles to insert personnel close to the target area. Military vehicles are normally built with a degree of low-observability in mind and whilst this is not enough to hide a grav APC from sensors of its own Tech Level it may defeat lower-tech equipment.

High-tech mercenary forces can become rather blasé about such operations, becoming used to flying to the target whilst the poor dumb yokels stare at their primitive radar screens and see nothing. However, local forces can still spot stealthy vehicles if they keep a sharp lookout and advanced sensor packages are not all that expensive. Indeed, some mercenary units specialise in installing ‘black boxed’ sensor and communications equipment and training the locals to use it.

Where stealth is a necessity, small mercenary forces have an advantage over larger ones. The skills of infiltration are little different at TL15 as they are at TL5; only the supporting technology differs. Most infantry units are trained in basic fieldcraft and movement in hostile terrain but there is only so much time for training so skills in this field will be at a low level. A non-specialist unit attempting to infiltrate an enemy position uses its ECEI modifier as normal to determine the level of success. Specialists such as snipers and commandos may gain additional DMs for their expertise. See Book 2, page 13 for details.

Any attempt at stealthy infiltration is resolved using the Infiltration Resolution table. The target area is abstracted as three zones: Remote, Short and Immediate. The latter is where the mercenaries want to be; close enough to their target that the active phase of the mission can be launched without additional movement or preparation. The short region is close enough that the mission can be launched with considerable difficulty, probably requiring the elimination or bypassing of additional guards or emplacements. A force that is detected in the Remote area has completely failed to sneak up on the enemy. If the target installation has artillery or similar long-range weapons they can engage the detected force and aerospace or other mobile assets might be called in to make an intercept. On the plus side it is relatively easy to break off from this point.

A force that simply flies or drives to the target relying on stealthy or low-observable vehicles uses its Tech Level DM, minus the Tech Level DM of the target formation, on the Infiltration Resolution table. The same applies to forces making a vertical envelopment by meteoric assault, with an additional DM-2 resulting from the inevitable signature increase caused by passage through atmosphere or gravitic braking systems. Note that some local forces may have much higher-tech detection equipment than their normal loadout and will use the highest Tech Level DM available.

Forces making a more stealthy approach use their ECEI as a modifier in addition to the opposed Tech Level DMs and may receive additional DMs for circumstances or capabilities. Stealthy units

Infiltration Resolution

2D+DMs	Detection	Details
0 or less	Detected Early in Remote Region	The force was detected well short of the target but was not aware of this. It can be engaged with heavy weapons. It is quite possible the infiltrating force will be massacred if the enemy has heavy defences. The enemy has time to set up an ambush or a capture attempt at the target zone.
1–3	Detected in Remote Region	The force was detected well short of the target and can be engaged with heavy weapons.
4–6	Detected in Short Region	The force is detected short of the target but can still deploy. It will be engaged by local defences and vehicles may be targeted by heavy weapons. The force will have to fight its way to the target.
7–9	Detected in Immediate Region	The infiltrating force is detected very close to the target, more or less at the intended deployment point. It will have to quietly eliminate whoever detected it or 'go loud' to continue the advance.
10–12	Undetected	The force reaches its start point completely undetected.
13–15	Undetected: Enemy Oblivious	The force reaches its start point completely undetected. The enemy is distracted or completely oblivious of the situation. DM+2 applies to further attempts to resolve actions on the mission until the advantage is lost.
16+	Undetected: Unexpected Opportunity	The force is undetected as above, and in addition the infiltrators gain an unexpected opportunity.

have an intrinsic DM to infiltrate an enemy position and additional DMs might be imposed by extremely complacent hostiles or a diversionary operation drawing attention elsewhere. If the Travellers want to create a diversion or distraction they will have to plan this as an operation and commit part of their force or have allies carry it out. A typical diversion will grant the Travellers DM+2 on their infiltration or exfiltration check.

A force that is deliberately moving slowly and carefully gains DM+2 and one moving with extreme care – such as taking 12 hours to crawl 500 metres between enemy patrols – gains DM+4. A force that contains vehicles of any type, even stealthy ones, is subject to DM-2 for small vehicles and DM-4 for larger ones such as grav APCs.

As always, the outcome of an infiltration must be interpreted by the Referee. Quick action by the Travellers might be sufficient to salvage a situation that is going south. For example, if upon realising their over-confident approach in grav vehicles has been detected the Travellers abort their mission and streak away from the area they may avoid the worst of the response. A desperate knife throw or snapshot with a suppressed weapon might be enough to silence the guard who has spotted their infiltration. These are moments where an abstracted resolution turns into a mini-adventure.

If the Travellers' plan requires a sniper in position or similar preparatory infiltration, this can be resolved using the same system. An entire operation could be blown by the discovery of an observation post, with the mercenaries having to alter their mission plan to support the infiltration unit or dash onto an alerted objective.

FIGHTING THROUGH TO AN OBJECTIVE

As they approach the target the mercenaries must make an infiltration check. This assumes they make some effort to avoid detection, of course. If they prefer to charge in with appropriate music blasting the raiders are automatically detected in the Remote zone. The enemy will naturally attempt to prevent the mercenaries reaching their target.

Attackers detected in the Remote region will usually be attacked with artillery or aerospace defence weapons depending on whether they are using grav or ground transport. The relevant CBAS characteristic for the target is used in this case, on the Fighting Through table. If the mercenaries are detected in the Short zone they will be attacked with aerospace or short-range ground combat weapons; Combat or Aerospace is used in this case. A force detected in the Immediate zone will almost certainly face ground combat assets, unless the mercenaries are somehow making the entire raid from an airborne posture. This might happen if they happen to be from a species that can fly or have access to grav belts but it is a strange way to go about attacking a ground installation.

In some cases the mercenaries might be intercepted by ground forces instead of long-range weapons but the process of fighting through to the target is the same in each case. The mercenaries must resolve a phase of combat and obtain a successful result for each zone they pass through on the way to the target – but only if they have been detected. A force attacked with artillery or bombardment weapons cannot inflict meaningful harm upon the launching unit, so a positive outcome on the resolution simply means the attackers were not forced to turn back. Similarly, the goal is not to defeat every intercepting patrol or troublesome machine-gun nest. Instead the mercenaries' success means they brushed aside opposition and pushed on with their mission.

Fighting Through

2D+DMs	Outcome
0 or less	Total Defeat: The attack disintegrates into chaos and must be aborted. The attackers check for casualties with DM-2.
1–3	Defeat: The force is defeated and must fall back to a safe rally point.
3–5	Bogged Down: The attacking force does not manage to advance. It may abort the attack or try to struggle through. If this is attempted, apply DM-1 on casualty determination for each phase the attackers are bogged down.
6–8	Contested Advance. The attacking force pushes through the zone but takes some damage. When casualties for the operation are determined the force suffers DM-1 for each phase of Contested Advance.
9–11	Advance: The force crosses the contested zone without taking undue casualties.
12+	Overrun: The force crosses the contested zone rapidly, driving off intercepting forces or causing the target to lose tracking. If another zone must still be crossed, the mercenaries do so without coming under fire. Apply DM+2 to resolve combat at the target or to determine casualties at the end of the mission.

A force that faces opposition on the way to the target resolves casualties only once, at the end of the mission. Casualties taken on the way in are factored into this in the form of a DM on the resolution check.

EXFILTRATION AND BREAKING OFF

Exfiltration from a mission target poses a different set of problems to infiltration. Usually the enemy will be alerted that something has happened but may also be confused or distracted. A clean exfiltration breaks contact with enemy forces at the earliest opportunity, allowing the unit to leave the area either under its own power or courtesy of a rendezvous with transport assets. A hot exfiltration is more of a problem, usually requiring personnel to board transports whilst fending off pursuit. This is considered to be an example of breaking off from combat; one of the most hazardous activities a mercenary unit can engage in.

Some results from combat resolution require a force to break off; other situations allow a force to break off it is appropriate to do so. A force using Reckless tactics will not break off and one being Aggressive cannot do so during the early phases of a battle. To break off from combat a unit must get far enough away from its enemies they cannot pursue or attack it. This can be a problem for slow-moving forces but in some cases the enemy will not pursue for various reasons.

A successful break-off can use speed or stealth, or movement through terrain the enemy cannot traverse. To break contact by stealth the unit must make a successful Exfiltration check using the Exfiltration Resolution table. The unit's ECEI is used as a DM on this check and stealthy units may have additional DMs. If a stealthy exfiltration fails the unit will have to break off, although this is made much easier if the unit has put some distance between it and the target.

Exfiltration Resolution

2D+DMs	Detection	Details
0 or less	Surprised in Immediate Region	The force is caught unexpectedly by hostiles close to the target zone. An additional DM-4 applies attempts to break off from this point.
1–3	Detected in Immediate Region	The force was detected close to the target and must break off to attempt a hot exfiltration.
4–6	Detected in Short Region	The force is detected some distance from the target. DM +2 applies to its attempts to break off.
7–9	Detected in Remote Region	The force is detected but is far from the target. DM +6 applies to attempts to break off.
10–12	Undetected	The force reaches the exfiltration point without enemy contact.
13+	Perfect Exfiltration	The force reaches its exfiltration point without enemy contact and leaves virtually no clues it has been present. Even a detailed investigation is unlikely to determine who carried out the operation or how.

The Referee may grant the exfiltrating force additional DMs for assistance such as a diversionary attack or cover from concealed snipers along the exfil route. This is typically worth DM+1 or +2 but a particularly good plan might grant a larger DM.

To break contact using speed or mobility through difficult terrain, a force will usually give the opposition a reason to slow down, such as a brief counterattack or creating the suspicion of an ambush or minefield. Escape requires a successful Mobility check, which will usually be of Average (8+) difficulty. If the enemy is not mounting an active pursuit (see below) the force will take some damage but manage to get clear. The amount of casualties suffered is determined by an additional casualties check with the outcome of the Mobility check as a DM.

SEARCH AND PURSUIT

Often when a target is attacked the enemy will be stunned or satisfied with repulsing the assault. The retiring attackers will be fired upon and a there may be a local pursuit but forces assigned to defend an area will not usually maintain an active pursuit even if they are equipped to do so. An active pursuit occurs when a force intends to maximise the effects of the defeat inflicted upon its enemies by maintaining contact and harassing them to cause further casualties or prevent regrouping. It has been said that in pursuit 'brigades are not necessary; battalions will do' – in other words once a force is retreating in the face of the enemy pressure can be maintained by smaller units. However, this assumes that the enemy is retreating in disorder. A pursuing force that runs into a determined and well-organised rearguard may be in trouble.

A pursuit can only be made if the target force knows it has been attacked and has some idea which way the attackers went. Some acts of sabotage, kidnap and the like might be carried out in such a way the enemy does not realise anything has happened until well after the force has left the area or they might be induced to believe the attack was in fact an accident. If this is the case, no pursuit can be made. In the case where the enemy knows an operation has been carried out but cannot be sure which way the attackers went, a search will be mounted. This is simulated by the exfiltration check above. If the mercenaries are really daring they might even stay close to the enemy base, evade a search and strike again later. A successful Exfiltration check can be used to simulate this gambit; in this case if the force is not detected it will be assumed by the enemy to have left the area when in fact it has gone to ground nearby.

If a force wishes to maintain an active pursuit the enemy formation is assumed to have escaped unless the pursuit succeeds. Rather than checking to break off, the pursuing force must make an Average (8+) Mobility check. The Effect of this Mobility check is used as a DM on the Pursuit Outcome table. This is subject to additional DMs as follows:

If the force was Routed: DM+6
If the force was Defeated: DM+3
If the force chose to retire, such as after a successful raid: DM+0
If the retiring force covered its retreat with delaying forces, mines or a similar gambit: DM-2
If a force is already subject to DMs for a bad defeat, these are not applied to the pursuit but do apply to any renewed combat.

Pursuit Outcome

2D+ DMs	Outcome
0 or less	Disaster: The pursuing force collapses in disorder and loses contact. Determine its casualties from this fiasco in addition to any from the combat that just occurred. The retiring force escapes with no damage.
1–2	Failure: The pursing force loses contact without inflicting any significant casualties.
3–5	Tenuous Contact Maintained: The pursuing force follows its opponent but is unable to bring it to action. Pursuit may be maintained but a cumulative DM-2 applies until either contact is lost, the pursuers choose to break off or the enemy are brought to action.
6–8	Contact Maintained: The pursuers remain in contact but cannot bring their opponents to action. They could guide in air strikes or assist other forces in making an intercept with their knowledge of the enemy position but cannot act directly.
9–11	Harassment: The pursuing force inflicts casualties on the retiring enemy. A cumulative DM+2 applies, possibly reducing or cancelling out earlier Tenuous Contact DMs, until the pursuit is resolved or the enemy accepts action.
12–14	Brought to Action: The pursued force is caught and brought to action. It must fight at least one round of combat before attempting to break off again. Collapse may occur.
15+	Overrun: The pursued force has been caught in a disorganised state. It must fight at least one round of combat before attempting to break off again. Collapse may occur.

If a force is subjected to one or more incidences of harassment during a retreat, casualties for these are determined at the end of the pursuit. If additional combat was fought, DM-1 applies to the force's check to determine casualties for each incidence of harassment. If no additional combat was fought the force checks for casualties with DM+0 if it was only harassed once and a cumulative DM-1 for each incidence thereafter.

If a force chooses to stand and fight it must resolve a new combat with DM-2. If brought to action this is DM–4, and if overrun the DM is –8. A new attempt to break off can be made after any phase of this new combat, subject to these DMs. This combat is also subject to DMs from a previous defeat.

A force that is brought to action or overrun may collapse or be unable to fight effectively. A Morale check is required, with DM-4 if the force was Overrun. If this check is failed the force suffers the negative Effect as an additional DM on combat resolution and is likely to be heavily defeated. If the Effect of this check is –6 or more the force collapses.

A collapsed force is considered Routed before combat begins and suffers casualties from the defeat with DM-6. A collapsed force is dispersed and will take some time to regroup. In the meantime pursuit is ended.

A pursued force might be rescued by another unit intercepting the pursuers or setting up an ambush. It might even be possible to feign rout in order to draw the enemy into an ambush but this is one of the hardest operations to carry out effectively.

RAIDS AND SABOTAGE

Small mercenary units are often hired as raiders rather than warfighters. A raid might be undertaken for various reasons; to obtain intelligence, to cause damage or disable a capability, or as a diversion from other activities. Raids are generally undertaken by forces too small to take and keep possession of the target area but with sufficient firepower to eliminate opposition and possibly dominate the target area for a short time. A similar situation exists where a small force attempts to take and hold an objective long enough for reinforcements to arrive or for other forces to do what is necessary elsewhere. Examples include a small force dropped from orbit directly onto the downport with orders to hold it until larger forces arrive by more conventional means or a raid on the planetary aerospace defence headquarters intended to disrupt operations long enough for an invasion fleet to start landing troops.

A raid will typically involve an approach or infiltration and the plan should include provision for the raiders to be relieved or extracted. Once the force has reached its objective, the raid can be resolved as an adventure or using the normal combat resolution if the Referee desires. However, a raid is a slightly different situation to a stand-up fight and can be resolved using the table below.

Raid resolution assumes an installation, settlement or camp of some kind is being attacked and that there are some kind of security procedures in place. If the raid is against a major fortification, it provides much less benefit to the defenders than if the mercenaries were staging a major attack. Bases and fortifications are discussed on page 95 but once inside the fortification the mercenaries (or those raiding them) will have nullified most of the advantages offered by fortification.

A force fighting its way to a fortified target is not engaging the fortification itself, so its combat DM is not applied. Likewise the full DM is not used once the raiding force is at the target, because it is inside the fortification. The fortification still offers some advantages to its security force.

Once the raiding force has reached its target the mission can be carried out. If this is an attack, it is resolved as a normal combat, with a successful result indicating the mission objective has been achieved. This must be interpreted by the Referee but typically means something controlled from the target has been put out of action for a time or that the mercenaries are temporarily in control of the area. They may have to decide whether to retire or try to cling on if a counterattack appears but that will be a separate action.

In some cases, such as quiet sabotage, the mercenaries will prefer to plant charges or steal documents then slip away. This is resolved using the Raid Outcome table, with the raiders' ECEI as a positive DM and that of the security force at the target as a negative DM. Additional DMs may also apply, such as that provided by a fortification.

Raid Outcome

2D + DMs	Outcome
0 or less	**Fiasco:** The raiding force completely fails to meet its objectives and stumbles into heavier-than-expected security. The force must attempt to break off and make a hot exfiltration, with DM-4 applying to the attempt.
1–3	**Mission Failure:** The raiding force is prevented from carrying out its intentions and must either defeat the local security detachment in a straight-up fight or break off without anything to show for it.
3–5	**Noisy Success:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for, more or less, but becomes entangled in a confused fight with the security detail at the target. Some personnel may have been captured already. The raiders must decide whether to fight to free them or break off with the enemy in contact.
6–8	**Detection:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for but is detected as it prepares to withdraw. Attempts to make a hot exfiltration are resolved as per Exfiltration on page 102.
9–11	**Late Detection:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for but is detected as it withdraws. Attempts to make a hot exfiltration are resolved as per Exfiltration on page 102, but with DM+2.
12–14	**No Detection:** The raiding force accomplishes what it came for without 'going loud' and slips away before the security force realises anything has happened.
15+	**Excellent Success:** The raiders were not detected. If appropriate, the enemy does not even know anything has happened yet – they are unaware documents have been taken or equipment sabotaged. If this cannot be the case, the raiders encounter an unexpected opportunity.

TIMING OF ENGAGEMENTS

The timing of an engagement can be critical, especially if the Travellers are doing something else at the same time or if coordination with another force is required. If the mercenaries are relying on a local force to sweep aside opposition so they can sweep through to the main target, the timing will be critical. If the mercenaries arrive and find the enemy force still in position or engaged with the locals they may have to join that battle or dash through taking casualties on the way. Either option will result in disorganisation of the force and possible dislocation of the plan.

The timing of phases is based on the size of the mercenaries' force and can be used to match up engagements. For example, the mercenaries might time their movement to coincide with phase two of the clearing force's attack. If the clearing attack only takes one or two phases and is successful the way is open or opening as the mercenaries arrive. If not, the Travellers will have to deal with this situation and their timings for the main attack will be disrupted. This might result in the enemy being on high alert or abandoning an untenable position. Reinforcements may be on the way or whatever other effects the Referee deems necessary. What is certain is that the situation will be different than if the clearing force did its job at the right time.

The Referee should be mindful of the fact that battles of annihilation are extremely rare. It can happen, especially when overwhelmingly powerful weaponry is used or one side is fanatical, that forces are wiped out before they can flee or surrender. This is an unusual situation but some clients seem to expect it to happen as a matter of course. A client may demand to know why the target was not completely eliminated or want an explanation for the mercenaries' retreat when they clearly should have fought to the last. Similarly, the Travellers may expect much higher casualties – among their opponents at least – than is realistic.

In reality, most combat takes the form of snapshots at fleeting targets or suppressing fire that expends a lot of ammunition without hitting anyone. This does not mean it is wasted; a hail of fire will keep the enemy from manoeuvring or cost them casualties if they do and may convince hostiles to pull back from their positions. It is difficult to aim coolly and carefully with bullets striking your cover. Prodigious ammunition expenditure is part and parcel of winning a battle without taking heavy casualties. Precision weapons such as guided missiles or snipers do alter the shots-fired-to-casualties ratio but on the whole a mercenary unit can expect to expend a lot of ammunition for every casualty inflicted.

If the Travellers want to expend less ammunition they can put their troops on a reduced supply budget and insist on aimed fire rather than suppressing an area but this will reduce effectiveness. Shorter-range engagements also tend to produce more casualties for the same amount of ammunition and effort. Short range also makes it more difficult for one side to break off if the fight is not going well or increases casualties if they do. Even then, what normally happens is a series of fleeting engagements between units on the move, fire coming from somewhere that cannot be located and dashes between cover until one side – or sometimes both – decides they cannot win and starts to pull back. Sometimes this happens piecemeal as part of the losing-the-battle process, with parts of a force going to ground rather than supporting their fellows or beginning to retreat leaving more aggressive personnel in the lurch.

Not all of these early leavers are deliberate deserters. Some become confused and get lost, blundering out of the combat zone or becoming accidental prisoners. Others are shocked and scared or genuinely think the battle is lost. Some may actually be misled by the enemy as part of a deliberate psychological operation to get them to surrender. Often victory goes not to the most impressive fighting force but to those who keep trying to win the longest. An individual with little information can only react to what is going on immediately around them, and may not know that the battle is all but won. A unit's ECEI is an indicator of the factors that inspire individuals and small groups to fight on in such confused circumstances. Often a battle hinges on the decision by a handful of soldiers to stick to their position, confident that their comrades will not abandon them or to go forward in the expectation that support will be provided when it is needed.

Most such situations can be dealt with using the normal combat resolution system but sometimes the Travellers may want to do something that will produce a particular result. For example, they may wish to carry out a rapid movement into the enemy rear to allow retreating forces to be ambushed or trapped, or a deception to make the enemy think they are surrounded. Such actions should be resolved as a separate combat if appropriate and should be resolved at a time best suited to drama and keeping the Travellers guessing.

Example

The Travellers are assaulting a village held by the enemy, hoping to drive them back. The only escape route is a narrow bridge over a deep ravine, which has been secured by a small detachment. The Travellers hope to leverage a victory at the village into a strategic success by trapping the enemy. If they assault the bridge first, the defenders will know their escape route has been compromised and will alter their battle plan accordingly. They may fight more determinedly in the village, making victory more costly for the Travellers, or make a breakout attempt ahead of the attack on the village. If the Travellers are happy for this to happen they can plan the attack accordingly. If not, they will have to delay the bridge assault until the village attack is already underway and the enemy is committed. The bridge attack will not be resolved until the outcome of the fight in the village is determined. That may mean the Travellers will not know if the bridge is held by their people or the enemy, adding to the tension of the situation.

The Referee resolves the village attack and, sure enough, the enemy decides to retreat after taking casualties. With a small rearguard holding out for now, they board their vehicles and race for the bridge to escape. Now it is necessary to know if the Travellers' attack was successful or not. If it was repelled, the enemy will be able to use the bridge and might even capture some of the mercenaries. If it was completely successful the mercenaries will be in defensive positions ready to ambush the escaping hostiles. An inconclusive result might mean the mercenaries are hotly engaged with the bridge defenders when the lead elements of the retreating force arrive. The resulting multi-layered sandwich battle could be very costly for either or both sides.

A secondary operation of this sort can be used to improve the results of a successful battle, as can an active pursuit of a defeated force. The situation above should be resolved as a new combat, with the fleeing hostiles disorganised and possibly trapped. Some elements may break though and escape if they defeat the mercenary detachment at the bridge or a large segment of the force may be trapped. A fight to the last is likely only if the hostiles expect to be mistreated upon surrender; more likely the fleeing force will put up a confused and patchy defence then collapse.

This situation could be abstracted as a typical battle, with the Referee ruling that any form of defeat on the part of the trapped force must be treated as a strategic defeat. This is in keeping with the old adage of giving battle on deadly ground – where the effects of a defeat are magnified. Such a ruling makes sense in any situation where a force cannot retreat. However, a force that knows it cannot escape will generally fight harder and should be given DM+1 to +3 to its Combat characteristic. The worse the fate thought to be awaiting captives – whether this is real or the result of propaganda – the harder the force will fight.

Other gambits can be resolved using a DM to or a modified outcome from the normal combat rules. A force that is defeated but cannot retreat must surrender or be annihilated. Which happens is usually up to the winning side. In such a situation it is reasonable to consider a tactical victory to be a strategic one and for casualties to be almost total. Most of these will be prisoners, which may present the mercenaries with a new problem.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

A mercenary contract will often be accompanied by a set of rules of engagement and most units have their own rules in place. The majority of mercenary tickets take place in a situation that stops short of open warfare and operations may well be carried out in close proximity to people who are just trying to live their lives. For example, if the Travellers are hired to deal with an insurgency or provide security for aid convoys in a disaster zone they may be involved in heavy combat but at the same time must avoid causing civilian casualties or an incident that makes matters worse for the client.

Some mercenary operations fall under what is popularly termed 'black ops'. Such operations are deniable and nobody is going to admit responsibility for what is almost certainly an illegal operation. Most mercenaries dislike such missions because they are likely to be abandoned or disavowed if captured and the client may try to silence them whether or not the operation is successful. On the other hand, if the operation officially never happened and nobody will talk about it, the mercenaries are free to pretty much do whatever they please. There are still good reasons for staying low-key and avoiding entanglements with bystanders but a client willing to pay for the illegal and deniable destruction of a rival's business headquarters cannot realistically object if the operation was not conducted with regard to avoiding collateral damage.

Other mercenary operations are conducted in a legal grey area. For example, the client is a government that considers what they are doing to be justified and sanctions it but the target does not recognise this authority. One example of this is a situation where a government has decided to unilaterally nationalise the local assets of an offworld corporation. The removal of security personnel by force is legal from the point of view of the government but the corporation would consider it a violation of its territory and an unwarranted attack on its employees.

The legal wrangling over such matters can go on for years, so wise mercenaries require a 'hold harmless' clause that essentially says the mercenary unit will not be subject to legal or civil penalties if the operation is later 'found to be ill-judged' on the part of the client. How much protection these clauses offer depends greatly on the power of the client and of course they do not prevent the victims from attempting to gain redress by other methods. Mercenary commanders routinely search for connections between a prospective client and a former opponent, just in case the ticket is not what it seems.

Even when everything is above board, the mercenaries will be bound by rules of engagement and the laws of war as recognised in the area of operations. Typically this means the unit will face penalties for carrying out or failing to prevent atrocities or breaches of the rules. These are often convoluted or strict to the point where the force is unable to act freely. For example, rules of engagement on a security ticket might permit the use of force only in self-defence or to protect specific people or assets. It may be that the Travellers are forbidden to fire at a sniper who is shooting over their positions into a refugee camp nearby.

Generally speaking, the local Law Level will dictate how tight (some would say absurd) the rules of engagement may be. A common one is the 'self-defence only' clause attached to many security and peacekeeping operations. Whilst often well-meant this sometimes means a unit cannot respond to a request for help from an allied position just down the road or may act only in very specific circumstances. This can lead to difficult choices for the mercenaries and may be useful in creating plot elements.

For example, local insurgents have discovered the unit's rules of engagement and are exploiting the situation. The mercenaries spot a suspicious-looking individual but are not permitted to do anything until a clear threat emerges. When this individual suddenly produces a grenade and starts to throw it, the mercenaries are permitted to shoot but even aiming weapons at him is forbidden until the grenade and the intent to use it are positively identified. As soon as the grenade leaves the insurgent's hand, he is 'no longer a threat' and can simply saunter away. Anyone firing at him would be committing a breach of the rules of engagement. It might be possible to pursue and apprehend the attacker but it may be that the mercenaries are not empowered to do so or cannot leave their positions. Ridiculous as this situation may sound, it is a fact of life for those working security or peacekeeping tickets.

Occasionally, factions inside the client's organisation will use this sort of thing to hamper the mercenaries or create an incident they can exploit. More commonly the rules will be well-intentioned but needlessly restrictive. The mercenaries' attempts to get around the rules or to deal with the fallout from a breech can be an interesting episode or even the focus of an adventure. It may be that the Travellers end up colluding with the client to find a way to bypass the client's own rules of engagement in a way that nobody can criticise. Being a mercenary is not just about bullets and shell fragments; sometimes a good lawyer is more useful than body armour.

A unit's legal skills are generally indicated by its CEI. In small units this is just one more thing for the commander or perhaps a subordinate to deal with. 'Legal, Logistics and Intelligence' is a common remit for the second-in-command of a small unit, although larger formations usually employ a legal staff either as part of their military headquarters or as a civilian back-at-base detachment.

Legal challenges can be used by the Referee as a change of pace or a plot element. Perhaps a supporting unit suddenly pulls out or moves to a self-defence-only posture in the middle of a critical operation. The Travellers discover it is responding to a legal gambit and have to deal with a changed situation. This sort of thing is rare in an all-out war but when operating in a 'war-like situation' an enemy will use any means to neutralise opposing assets. Of course, the Travellers have the same options.

THE FOG OF WAR

It is rare that a commander has perfectly detailed information available and apparently clear information can sometimes be wildly wrong. A detailed intelligence picture can be built up over time but there is always the possibility of a mistake or deliberate deception. This is true both on a large and small scale, although elaborate deception operations take time to put into effect.

Information is one of the most important commodities in warfare and mercenary intelligence operatives are rarely short of work. Specialist units are not uncommon, since intelligence work requires a depth of knowledge and experience many planetary armed forces are lacking. Intelligence specialist mercenaries are usually one of three types, with some units having all three and others specialising in one area. Cyber-intelligence operatives specialise in hacking enemy systems and obtaining information or disrupting operations remotely and often do not look 'military' in the slightest. Some intelligence analysts are similar in appearance, although those associated with a military unit usually conform to its regulations. Field operatives are usually capable of passing themselves off as nondescript individuals and will avoid extremes of dress and appearance, although some are rather direct in their methods and resemble other combat troops.

The Travellers' unit may contain intelligence personnel – possibly just a lone, overworked intelligence officer – or the campaign might revolve around the actions of a force of 'intelligence commandos'. Units of this sort specialise in recovering information, documents and sometimes personnel from the immediate aftermath of a combat, or in making raids to get information. A mercenary intelligence commando unit will usually have both field and analysis people to allow it to provide a full service.

Well-equipped mercenary forces can often provide their employers with useful intelligence even if this is not their main function. For example, the communications equipment owned by a TL12 mercenary unit might be entirely capable of penetrating the local TL7 communications net. At the very least it will be possible to triangulate signal sources and analyse the types of emissions to get an idea of enemy dispositions and force types. The converse is also possible. If the enemy has a reasonable signals intelligence capability this can be exploited to deceive their analysts. With the right equipment a platoon-sized mercenary force can impersonate a TL6 tank division well enough to deceive an unwary enemy.

The Travellers will be able to make their lives a bit safer and their operations more effective by exploiting the hidden benefits their equipment and experience can offer. A high-tech mercenary unit has advantages over most local forces in terms of soldier-for-soldier fighting power but the possibilities go far beyond that. Those who exploit every gram of superiority tend to have a longer and more lucrative career than those who rely on their high-tech guns and body armour.

Combat tends to be confused and fluid. It is not always possible to be sure where fire is coming from, nor that certain the figures glimpsed passing the end of the street are hostiles. The ability to share information rapidly or to create blockouts that prevent artillery weapons firing on prohibited or friendly targets can save not only lives but also lawsuits. Not all mercenaries care about collateral damage but those who operate recklessly tend to find their potential client base shrinks once word gets out. Units that are precise and careful to avoid friendly and neutral casualties tend to benefit from not having a reputation as reckless thugs.

Any system can be penetrated, no matter how secure it appears to be. Some mercenary forces use personal transponders and weapons modified to recognise them. In theory such a weapon will not function if a friendly transponder is in the line of fire. However, this feature can be exploited by hackers or clever enemies who steal transponders or spoof their signals. Thus it is often necessary to rely on the skills and restraint of well-trained and experienced personnel. This is one reason why mercenaries are sometimes hired in preference to local forces, who might be over-reliant on technological aids or prone to being compromised when they are exploited. Local forces might simply be too inexperienced after years of peace to be able to handle a complex situation and if the mercenaries make mistakes the client can distance themselves from the unit and perhaps pass the blame to them.

This can generate Missions. The mercenaries might be sent to capture some enemy hardware so it can be examined and any loopholes in the programming exploited. This in turn may link back into legal matters, as the mercenaries are tasked with provoking an incident in which the enemy's reliance on their automated friend-or-foe system will be exploited. It might be that a major conflict could turn on such a pivot, with a critical mercenary unit taken out of the enemy arsenal by legal proceedings resulting from tampering with its equipment.

PSYOPS AND DECEPTION

Psychological operations (psyops) are an age-old form of warfare. They could be used in the longer term to make a battle unnecessary or in an immediate sense to alter its outcome. Some psyops are based upon deception, often by making the enemy think a region is about to be attacked in overwhelming force or that resistance will result in terrible consequences. For example, the Travellers might 'allow' the enemy to learn they are using a variant plasma gun, which produces huge amounts of radiation when fired. Troops who would be willing to fight bravely against conventional weapons may be unnerved by the prospect.

Sometimes psychological operations are based upon demonstrated truths or a clever misrepresentation of the situation. For example, the mercenaries might fire shells containing leaflets or simply make an announcement on the datanet that at a certain time an enemy position will be annihilated. This is unlikely to be heeded but if the mercenaries can make it happen – say by saturating the position with missiles or artillery fire – the next time they make such an announcement they may find the position abandoned shortly before the appointed time. This allows the Travellers to fulfil their mission with minimal bloodshed which will satisfy most clients.

Psychological operations will rarely unnerve an enemy to the point of complete collapse but they can be used to gain an advantage. The psyop should be planned by the Travellers then resolved as a mission, using the unit's Support DM. Success will give the Travellers an advantage, such as weakening the enemy's resolve or in the case of exceptional success causing desertions. Normally an advantage will amount to DM+1 or at most +2 to resolve an ensuing combat. If desertions are caused the amount can be determine by a casualties roll made on 1D+6, with the mercenaries Support DM applied negatively. These 'casualties' are subject to the usual rough 1/3 split; a third will be back in position within a day or so, a third will be back in a few days and a third are gone for good.

Psychological operations will rarely win a war but can be used to wear down the enemy or obtain a specific result. A psyop might be planned to force the enemy to take a particular action such as moving additional heavy weapons to a sector the Travellers do not intend to attack or releasing some prisoners taken in an earlier action. It might also be possible to convince enemy leaders to defect or withdraw support for their faction but an operation of this level would normally be played out at least in part as an Adventure.

Predictability and Standard Practice

In theory, a military force operating in the field should prepare defensive positions every time it stops moving. This is a lot of work and even the most diligent of soldiers will tire of it in short order. Less disciplined or weary units are unlikely to trouble themselves to any great degree and a habit of digging in after each move can actually be counterproductive. Someone who has just finished digging a foxhole and finding materials to make overhead cover may be reluctant to abandon it. Wasted effort of this sort will be accepted for a time but eventually morale will suffer.

Thus the Travellers should not be allowed to claim their troops always dig in and prepare fields of fire after every move and likewise they will sometimes catch enemy forces with their vehicles parked in vulnerable spots and personnel lounging about in the open. A unit's attention to defensive preparedness is usually indicated by ECEI. The Effect of an Average (8+) ECEI check can be used to determine how diligently personnel have set up their defences. Even if they are in a major fortress some personnel will be out in the open, hatches will be unsecured or equipment left in a vulnerable place. If some circumstance occurs that results in casualties, such as the sudden arrival of a time-on-target artillery attack or undetected hostile forces opening fire, the Effect of this check could be used as a modifier on the casualties chart or to determine if the enemy achieved surprise.

Professional soldiers have an eye for cover and concealment. Even if they have not made defensive preparations most will have recognised potential places to take cover and perhaps taken note of likely enemy positions. There will usually be some cover nearby, although an attack from an unexpected direction could lead to personnel taking cover on the wrong side of an obstruction, at least at first. Likewise, standard drills can be extremely useful but can also be exploited. If the Travellers are able to study their enemies' tactics they may be able to provoke a predictable response.

One example of this is to set up a 'mechanical ambush' with anti-personnel mines on one side of a road and open fire from the other. The force under attack will naturally move to take cover, only to find that as troops scramble into obvious places of cover they are faced with anti-personnel mines. Alternatively the Travellers might position a small detachment where it can fire on a likely stopping point for an enemy convoy, knowing that troops will take cover behind vehicles – with their backs to the Travellers' main force.

Astute Travellers might want to set up conditions whereby they can observe the enemy's habits and standard drills. Some forces find this too much effort, and sometimes there will be no time or opportunity, but even then there are quick and easy sources of information. If the Travellers know or can find out where the local commanders trained or which doctrine they follow, it is possible to make predictions about what engaged forces will do. It is unusual for smaller militaries to formulate their own doctrine; most follow one of the major powers with a few local variations. Indeed, in many cases advisors from a larger power will assist in 'training the trainers' of a smaller one's military.

If the Travellers have access to the tactics manuals of their opponent or the works they are based upon, they can usually make predictions or modify tactics to exploit the limitations of local forces. This can be done on a long or short timetable. If the Travellers undertake some good analysis work and successfully resolve an Intelligence Event they may be granted a DM either to reduce casualties or improve combat resolution. This will require time and planning, and may be a Mission or an Adventure for those involved. The payoff might be worth it over a lengthy ticket but for a quick strike mission there is unlikely to be time.

Predictions can be made in specific ways as well, sometimes in the face of the enemy. A force laying an ambush or expecting an encounter will always make assumptions about what the enemy force will do but in some cases specific predictions may be highly useful. For example, an enemy force may be prone to political showing-off rather than maximising security and effectiveness. The arrival of a new force in the theatre of war is likely to be about demonstrating power in a manner that can be exploited in propaganda vids. The mercenaries might therefore conclude that the new arrivals might conduct a parade or at least park their vehicles in an impressive formation rather than placing them under cover. If the Travellers go to the trouble of looking for opportunities like this they may be able to formulate a war-winning strategy based around a sudden attack or artillery barrage against a unit that thinks it is operating under peacetime conditions. This sort of search for a flaw or opportunity might be scripted by the Referee as part of the ticket or earned by the Travellers through good planning, inventive ideas and an intelligence operation.

INTERACTIONS WITH THE LOCALS

All units impose some measure of security on their immediate surroundings, whether that be their base or area of operations. Not all do it particularly effectively, however. A unit's ECEI can be used to indicate the effectiveness of its security and also the professionalism with which local people are treated. Mercenary units typically want as little interaction as possible for security reasons and also to avoid potential entanglements but it is rarely possible to create a complete exclusion zone without being heavy-handed. Typically this means forcibly removing or excluding the local population from certain areas, which can lead to resentment and the sort of interaction the mercenaries do not want.

The alternative is to maintain security as well as possible but to interact with the local population in a professional or even positive manner. If the mercenaries are operating out of local military bases or government facilities the matter can be left to the locals. However, the way they act might not sit well with the mercenaries or the security arrangements might be lacking. This can have implications for the mercenaries in the field if they are being observed in their preparations or might even lead to the base being infiltrated and attacked.

The success of security arrangements – whether the mercenaries benefit from them or are trying to bypass them – is as usual based on ECEI, although there might be variations depending on circumstances. A corrupt local officer, suborned by the opposition, might create gaps in the mercenaries' security setup to allow infiltrators access. Wise mercenaries monitor the situation as best they can, though they may not have personnel to spare to handle their own security.

ECEI can also be used to determine how well general interactions with the local population tend to go. A low ECEI indicates a weary or sloppy unit that may be contemptuous of local people or heavy-handed towards them. A mercenary force that is present for a short time can usually get away with this but on a security or similar longer-term deployment there is time for the mercenaries' conduct to influence the course of their ticket. Mercenaries who are patient and polite with the locals might win friends and are certainly less likely to develop new enemies. This might pay off with some information quietly slipped to the mercenaries during a routine patrol or a request for help from someone who is being coerced into acting against the mercenary force. On the other hand, if the mercenaries' treatment of the locals is unpleasant they are unlikely to get help even if they demand it.

The Travellers can try to deliberately foster good relations with the local population if they want to, although this comes at the price of increased contact and perhaps vulnerability. Attempts to improve relations might be quite passive, such as insisting that members of the unit are polite and non-threatening, or could be active. In regions where infrastructure has been damaged by war or insurgency a mercenary unit may be able to provide medical assistance or help fix broken amenities which will generate goodwill – but also exposes unit members to ambush or abduction.

Some clients will object to the mercenaries spending time (and therefore the client's money) doing something other than fighting the enemy but many tickets cannot be brought to a successful conclusion by force of arms alone. If the local population can be won over they will cease supporting an insurgency or harbouring enemy personnel, which will enable the situation to be brought under control. One term for this sort of situation is 'three-block war', in which a mercenary unit may be engaged in an intense firefight, be providing disaster relief and be promoting security and a return to normal life – all at the same time and all within the space of three city blocks.

Most operations carried out in this sort of environment can be modelled using the standard DEI or ECEI resolution system, with Opportunities and Incidents reflecting the nature of the conflict. Sometimes something will happen – good or bad – which catches the mercenaries by surprise but is the result of their ongoing efforts or lack of them. For example, a badly beaten man is dumped at the gates of the mercenaries' compound along with a rifle that appears to have been broken over his head. Investigation suggests that this is an insurgent sniper who was on his way to a vantage point from which he intended to attack the mercenaries. Clearly the local population were opposed to this, perhaps as a result of the mercenaries' fair and civil treatment of them. It is often the case in insurgencies that most people just want to get back to a normal life. Those that continue to prosecute the conflict are prolonging the suffering of a population that has wearied of it. The Travellers can benefit from this, although it will work against them if they alienate the population.

Travellers who want to try to build trust and goodwill should plan Missions and Operations in support of this and if successful they will see a gradual swing towards their side. This should not happen overnight; one dice roll should never dictate the course of a campaign or ticket. Getting involved in a situation at this level generates a more immersive story and also creates new problems for the Travellers to solve. This sort of thing is desirable if the campaign is not to become an endless series of abstracted firefights.

HEARTS AND MINDS

Mercenaries are focused on getting the job done, which usually means capturing or destroying something, or teaching someone else how to do that. Wider considerations such as winning over the local population can usually be left to the client… unless what the mercenaries have been hired to do is part of a project to do that. 'Hearts and minds' operations are particularly important on some security tickets, where good relations with the local population can reduce problems or produce helpful results.

There are many ways to win hearts and minds, and many more ways to alienate people. A unit's ECEI is an indicator of how well it follows its own policies, whatever they may be. If the Travellers demonstrate contempt for the local population the Referee is justified in assuming the unit's attitude is similar. On the other hand, being overly 'soft with the locals' can hamper operations or even the unit's security.

Commanders who are concerned about relations tend to have strict rules about honourable conduct towards the local population, such as insisting that personnel pay fairly for goods and treat people with respect. A low ECEI suggests such policies are not followed even if they exist and even in a well-disciplined unit it may be that relations with the locals come a long way second to the unit getting what it needs. In some cases bullying and plundering the local population is seen as part of the job and the Travellers might have difficulty enforcing a more friendly policy even if they want one.

In general, relations can get worse quickly but improve only very slowly. The gradual shift in relations is modelled by the Relations Indicator for whatever group the Referee is focusing on. In a complex situation the Referee may have to keep track of multiple indicators but commonly there will only be one or two significant groups in an area of operations.

Every 2D days the Travellers may check to see if relations have changed. This is an Average (8+) ECEI check, which may be subject to additional DMs at the Referee's discretion. A unit that is trying to play fair by the locals and has some good policies in place can be granted DM+1 or at most +2, whilst one that clearly does not care all that much will suffer DM-1 or –2. A unit that is openly contemptuous, brutal or rapacious towards the locals will suffer greater DMs on this check. If the check is passed, the Relations Indicator is increased by +1. If the check is failed, it is decreased by –1.

When an incident occurs that might change relations more quickly, an additional check can be made. This might be triggered by the mercenaries sending a detachment to help the locals get their power back on or driving off some bandits that have little to do with the mission. Such activities may weary the unit's personnel and will expose them to additional danger, so Travellers who act like heavily armed do-gooders will eventually run into trouble. Likewise, particularly egregious incidents of mistreatment or tragedies such as the shooting of a local person who was thought to be an armed insurgent – or the faking of such an incident by the enemy – will trigger a check.

In the case of a potentially positive situation, succeeding in the check increases the Relations Indicator by +1; failing it will usually produce no result. The same is true of a potentially negative situation – failing the check will reduce the Relations Indicator but passing it will not improve relations.

Relations Indicator

Relations Indicator	Situation
0 or less	**Active Opposition:** The locals hate the mercenaries and may be in open opposition to them. Attacks on vulnerable personnel or destruction of equipment are commonplace and any mercenaries that fall into local hands are certain to be brutally mistreated.
1-2	**Hatred:** The locals hate the mercenaries and will openly refuse to deal with them or carry out acts of passive resistance. Some locals will join or assist the enemy and it will take little to trigger an uprising or similar attack. Minor acts of aggression against the mercenaries are common and anyone captured or abducted is likely to be harmed.
3-4	**Resentment:** The locals resent the mercenaries and will shun them or passively make their work harder. Information is hard to obtain and often distorted.
5-6	**Dislike:** The locals openly dislike the mercenaries but mostly try to ignore them. Information will not be volunteered but might be bought for an inflated price. Cooperation is likewise difficult to obtain since anyone collaborating with the mercenaries faces hostility from their neighbours.
7-8	**Wary:** The local population is, perhaps wisely, wary of the mercenaries and will try to keep contact to a minimum. This is the default level of interaction in most situations, unless something has already improved or soured relations.
9-10	**Neutral:** The local population is not unduly concerned about the presence of the mercenaries and will interact with them like any other strangers. That might mean attempting to fleece them in the market or steal their equipment if the local population is so inclined but this is done out of desire for profit rather than malice.
11-12	**Passively Friendly:** The locals are well-disposed towards the mercenaries and might assist them in a passive manner. Information might be volunteered if there is an expectation of reward and the mercenaries might be considered 'good friends to have' by some people.
13-14	**Actively Friendly:** The mercenaries have won the trust and friendship of at least a segment of the population. Information may well be volunteered with no expectation of reward and the mercenaries might be asked to help or advise purely because they are respected rather than for any sort of gain.
15+	**Adulation:** The mercenaries are admired and well-liked by the majority of the population, who will go out of their way to help and even protect them.

The Relations Indicator can be used to produce a DM just like a Traveller's characteristics, applied to attempts to negotiate, to determine if someone will agree to help or in any other situation where the locals' attitude influences their actions.

NEGOTIATING AND COERCION

Mercenaries may be able to rely on specialist business negotiators when determining the fine details of their contracts but there are many situations in the field where negotiation is useful. These include bargaining with local populations for supplies as well as trying to persuade enemies to surrender rather than fight on. Some situations can be resolved by a simple skill check by the relevant officer but often negotiations can drag on for a while with points clarified or amended. Battles have been won on the field and then lost at the negotiating table and mercenaries are well aware of this.

Major issues should not be resolved with a single skill check, especially if the Travellers are trying to obtain something outrageous. Fifteen minutes of tense negotiation might well be enough to persuade a band of gunmen to release the corporate officials and come out with their hands up but persuading a defeated nation to pledge everlasting allegiance to a new overlord is a more complex business.

Often, in large-scale negotiations, there are multiple issues that have to be agreed. Each one moves the negotiation closer to a result but any or all of them could require actions to be taken. For example, the mercenaries have inflicted a sharp defeat on the forces of their client's enemy and the client wants them to negotiate a modified border that removes a security threat. Ceding territory, even a little, is not something a nation does lightly. The former enemy is willing to consider the move but wants something in return – in this case the release of some of its personnel who have been captured by 'irregulars' who joined the fighting on the border. For a suitable fee the mercenaries agree to make this happen and are given a free hand to do so. It then turns out the irregulars want something from the government in return for the prisoners and the mercenaries find themselves with a choice between acting as negotiators between the irregulars and the government, or just cutting through the whole knot and using force to free former enemies from semi-official former allies.

A unit's negotiating ability can be abstracted using its Support characteristic or a Traveller can use their own skills. The table below indicates how well or badly the negotiation is going and is subject to DMs for the situation. If the Travellers are negotiating from a position of strength – either real or perceived – the Referee may award DM+1 or +2. In an extreme case, such as where a small enemy force is totally surrounded and enormously outgunned, the DM can be increased to a maximum of +4. Likewise, DMs can be negative if the Travellers are in a poor position. Even when making a generous offer from a position of dominance it is still possible to fail; the enemy leader's personal guard might decide to die with honour in a suicidal charge rather than turn them over. However, this is unusual; in most cases an agreement of some kind can be made.

Negotiations can spark additional missions and adventures. Indeed, the mercenaries might be hired after a war to assist in resolving a few troublesome clauses. This might mean getting the negotiators what they want or taking away bargaining chips the opposition has retained or perhaps giving them an incentive to make a deal by a demonstration of what might happen if they do not. Alternatively, the mercenaries might end up launching a covert mission to find out what the opponents are hiding or if they have weaknesses that can be exploited.

The Negotiation Resolution table can be used in a short or long-term negotiation. The Situation Indicator normally begins at a value of 7, assuming a fair deal is on the table, although the Referee may choose to set the starting position higher or lower depending on circumstances. A history of bad faith on one side might result in a very low Situation Indicator, requiring some strenuous diplomatic work. On the other hand a generous deal might predispose the opposition towards taking it.

When a proposal or amendment is offered the Travellers may make a Support, Diplomat or Persuade check, which will usually be of Average (8+) difficulty. The Effect of this check is applied to the Situation Indicator and the outcome applied. As usual the Referee must interpret the results; if a negotiation is going well then suddenly collapses there will be a reason and the reason might spawn new adventures.

Where a large negotiation is in progress, days or even weeks might pass between proposals or shifts in attitude. One side might be deliberately stalling to gain a better position or just to stave off capitulation. Mercenaries can find themselves with new troubles in a such a situation, with enemies taking advantage of stalled negotiations to shift their positions or reinforce threatened units. They might find themselves facing an enemy unit that has sort-of-surrendered and therefore cannot be legally attacked but which is digging in and strengthening its position. Perhaps the negotiations will be broken off when preparations are complete, allowing conflict to be resumed on more favourable terms?

Negotiation Resolution

Situation Indicator + Effect	Situation
0 or less	Rejection: The proposal is rejected. If the Travellers want to re-present it they will have to make some meaningful change to the situation or the deal.
1–3	Hostility: The opposition is hostile to the deal on the table and moving towards complete rejection. DM-4 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
4–5	Quibbles: The opposition continually quibbles over minor points, demands clarification of everything and rephrases what has been said in a way that changes its meaning. DM-2 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
6–7	Stalled: There is little agreement or movement towards one.
8–9	Progressing: The opposition is coming around to the idea of acceptance. DM+1 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
10–11	Good Progress: Many obstacles or objections have been overcome. DM+2 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks.
12–14	Partial Acceptance: The opposition are willing to accept a deal with just a few concessions. No DM applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks to push for full acceptance instead.
15+	Complete Acceptance: The opposition accepts the deal as presented, though perhaps without enthusiasm.

Example

The mercenaries have a band of gunmen surrounded and trapped but the gunmen claim to have hostages. The mercenaries want to negotiate a release and surrender, with guarantees of fair treatment. Unfortunately the mercenaries' client does not have a good reputation for treatment of captives, so the Referee decides the Situation Indicator will begin at 4.

The mercenaries' negotiator does her best, with a combined skill and characteristic DM+3, but is reduced by –2 for the attitude of the gunmen. The negotiator rolls a 9, modified to 10, for a total Effect +2 on her Persuade check. This brings the Situation Indicator up to 6; the negotiations are stalled but the gunmen are not so negative as they were.

Before the negotiator can try again something must change, at least a little. She cannot simply keep repeating the same offer. In this case, something has changed – the mercenaries have performed a little covert reconnaissance and learned that the gunmen have several seriously wounded comrades. The negotiator adds an offer of treatment for the wounded by the mercenaries' own personnel and urges their surrender. She gets no additional DM for this offer but it does allow a renewed attempt at negotiation. A roll of 8 on the Persuade check is modified to 11 for Effect +3 and this is added to the Situation Indicator. With a value of 9 the gunmen are being persuaded but have not yet agreed.

At this point the negotiator offers a new and persuasive argument: 'If you do not agree in 15 minutes we will break off negotiations. At some point after that we will storm the building and kill all of you'. The Referee decides this is worth DM+2 but as an ultimatum it is a risky gambit. If her terms are rejected the negotiator has to either go back on her word, which will weaken her position and cause a negative DM to be applied or she must do as she says.

The Persuade check is subject to the negotiator's own DM+3, +1 because the talks were Progressing and +2 for the final ultimatum which seems convincing. A roll of 6 on the Persuade check is modified to 12, with Effect +4. This brings the Situation Indicator to 13 – partial acceptance. The gunmen ask for a few minor concessions such as the mercenaries ensuring their families know where they are and who they surrendered to and these are agreed. A few minutes later the gunmen begin releasing the hostages and bringing out their wounded.

TIREDNESS, FATIGUE AND R&R

Anyone embarking on any sort of military career can expect to become sleep-deprived at some point. Tiredness and sleep-debt are a way of life, and career mercenaries learn how to stave off the effects in order to remain alert on guard and also how to squeeze in a few minutes here and there. Personnel who can manage to get even just a little sleep – two to four hours in every 24 – can continue to function in this manner for an extended period. Those who get little or none decline rapidly in effectiveness.

In situations where it is important the Referee must keep track of how long a unit has gone without proper rest. 'Proper rest' in this context means at least two hours sleep in every 24 and preferably more than that. Most civilians would consider four hours' uninterrupted sleep to be inadequate; mercenaries in the field are more likely to describe it as paradise.

Days without proper rest are cumulative, and are not remedied by getting two to four hours of rest. To remove the effects of one day without proper rest it is necessary to spend 12 hours resting. Some of this time is spent sleeping but 'rest' in this context includes such luxuries as a shower, clean clothes and half-decent food plus time to read mail, watch a vid and drink beer, and just generally relax. In reality, the recovery time from a long period without adequate rest increases exponentially after the first few days but these mechanics will serve for a mercenary campaign.

Cumulative Fatigue

Days Without Proper Rest	Effect
2	Extreme weariness, DM-2 on all tasks.
4	Severely impaired decision-making; DM-4 on all tasks.
6	Even simple tasks are difficult, personnel are prone to bursts of temper at the slightest provocation. DM-8 on all tasks.
8	Personnel are 'militarily useless' and cannot follow even simple instructions. DM-12 to any task that can be attempted.
10+	Personnel are virtually incapable of taking action or making decisions. Mental health issues are likely in the long term.

In an immediately life-threatening situation, personnel will act according to their training but badly. Negative DMs are halved for anyone carrying out a physical action in combat but anything requiring problem-solving or decision-making is subject to the full DM. Thus a mercenary will shoot at attackers with a halved negative DM but will suffer the full DM if they try to come up with a battle plan or even just use their radio to call for help.

In addition to the immediate effects of minimal rest, mercenaries operating in the field may become fatigued over time. This is more than mere tiredness; a fatigued unit becomes increasingly ineffective and makes poor decisions without necessarily realising exhaustion is the root cause. Good discipline and morale will keep fatigue at bay for a time but everyone is susceptible to the effects of too long in the field. These begin with as listlessness, argumentativeness and general inattention to details and gradually develops into internal bickering and feuds between personnel, over-focus on stupidly small details and ultimately mutiny.

Fatigue can be used as a plot device, providing an explanation for why a supposedly secure area was left unattended or how a member of the unit was suborned by the enemy. It can also be a source of pressure on the Travellers to get the job done rather than waiting until they have every possible advantage. If the Referee uses fatigue effectively, it will become another factor in the decisions made by the Travellers. Eventually they will stop trying to do the most effective thing possible to get the biggest DM on resolution rolls and start making decisions like real military commanders. This can have implications for the security of the unit's base and ultimately the success of its operations.

Fatigue is tracked for the mercenary unit as a whole and can also be tracked for key individuals or sub-units. It is tracked using the Company Fatigue Index, which is named to closely fit with the similar mechanic used in the *Naval Campaigns Sourcebook* and does not necessarily imply a company-sized unit. Separate Fatigue Indexes may be used if the Referee decides to do so, for smaller units and individuals. Fatigue Index starts at 0 and may increase at intervals during a ticket. This will not usually happen during the first few weeks of a deployment but undisciplined personnel can become bored and restless within days. Fatigue Index can also be applied to non-combatant personnel associated with the unit such as a client the mercenaries are providing security for. This can cause them to become increasingly impatient or unwilling to comply with instructions. Again this may help drive an adventure, forcing the Travellers to accept a quick-and-dirty solution rather than waiting for weeks until the perfect moment arrives.

After the initial interval shown on the Fatigue table and again each time the indicated interval has passed, the Fatigue Index automatically increases by +1. At the same time, the Referee should determine if the individual (or crew as a whole) has become Fatigued with a 2D check.

Fatigue

Unit Type/Circumstance	Interval
Undisciplined (for example, a mob of armed civilians rallied to deal with a local crisis)	1D Days
Typical (for example, an inexperienced but properly trained military unit)	2D Days
Disciplined (for example, an experienced mercenary force)	3D Days
Highly Disciplined (for example, an elite military unit)	4D Days
Poor conditions (for example, serving in a desert with inadequate food and shelter)	–1D Days
Good Conditions (for example generous supplies, regular R&R and a safe rear area to relax in)	+1D Days
Known Situation (for example if the mercenaries knew this would be a long deployment and made preparations)	+1D Days
Obvious Need (for example, the mercenaries are supporting friends rather than a mere client, and the situation obviously requires patience)	+2D Days
Frequent combat or danger	Treat each 1D as D3
Intense combat or danger	Treat each 1D as D3-1 and increase Fatigue Index by +2 after each interval

On average, Fatigue Index will increase by +1 every 11–12 days on deployment for a typical mercenary unit. The Referee may impose modifiers on the Fatigue check to avoid becoming fatigued, depending upon circumstances. Food in particular is important to morale, along with the ability to blow off some steam from time-to-time. Being confined to a fortified camp for long periods also takes its toll, though having some kind or recreation facility will help.

Becoming Fatigued

Any person or unit who has a Fatigue Index of one or more may become Fatigued in the course of a ticket. A check is made every time Fatigue Index increases; if the result is equal to or greater than the Fatigue Index, the subject has not become fatigued. For individuals, their highest level of any military skill (such as Gun Combat, Tactics or a technical skill connected with their role in the unit) can be used as a DM to avoid becoming Fatigued. When checking for the unit as a whole, ECEI is used. If the check is passed, there is no effect.

If the check is failed the unit (or individual) has become Fatigued. This goes far beyond mere tiredness; it has been described as a malaise of the soul. Personnel are irritable, disaffected and often listless. A Traveller or unit suffering from Fatigue suffers a Bane to all skill checks until the situation is remedied. In addition, Fatigue Index continues to rise at the prescribed intervals and each time a Fatigue check is made any member of the affected unit who is already Fatigued must make an END check that begins at Simple (2+) and rises one level in difficulty on each subsequent occasion.

A failed END check means that the individual has become dangerously incompetent. All skill checks are increased one level of difficulty (e.g. Average becomes Difficult). Failing the END check with Effect –6 or worse means the individual has suffered a breakdown. They may become aggressive towards colleagues, sufficiently depressed that they cannot perform their duties or otherwise a menace to the unit and the mission.

It would be unusual for a whole force to suffer a mass breakdown. Instead, the Referee should pick a small number of individuals who suffer serious effects, with the number increasing at each interval until the situation is remedied.

A typical mercenary unit has a fatigue interval of 11–12 days, which can be increased by various measures. On average, the unit will become Fatigued after 8 intervals, or 88–96 days in the field. This assumes routine patrolling or garrison duty, with relatively little danger. If the same force is seeing frequent brushes with the enemy the interval is reduced to around six days – 3D3 rather than 3D. In a situation where the force is on the front trench line of a major war, regularly being pounded by the enemy's artillery, the interval is 3D3–3 days or three days on average and Fatigue Index increases by +2 after each interval. It is possible for a unit to become Fatigued after just a few hours in such conditions.

Offsetting Fatigue

Fatigue Index can be reduced by various means. For individuals, a short period of rest and recuperation will reduce the Fatigue Index by –1. This might be something as basic as a 12-hour pass to go bar-hopping, with the occasional longer stand-down. Whole-unit Fatigue Index can be reduced in this manner if there is a rotation of personnel through R&R. This is standard practice on deployments of more than a couple of weeks, although it can be a problem when operating in an unfriendly area. On most longer deployments Fatigue Index will not be a factor, providing the Travellers are willing to accept the slight security risk inherent in allowing their personnel out of their base area. Fatigue will only become a factor if the unit is spending a long period in the field, such as on a counter-insurgency or security deployment.

If the Travellers want to make a special effort to defatigue their personnel they can do so in a great variety of ways. Sport competitions, formal dinners, award ceremonies or just an extended stand-down rotated through the unit can all help personnel refocus and return to duty with new energy. One of the Travellers must make a successful Average (8+) check on a relevant skill to present a suitable activity and can be creative in how this is done. For example if the Travellers decide to hold a multi-ballsports tournament with teams competing in events drawn at random, this might fall under Admin or a professional sport skill. If the check is successful, Fatigue Index is reduced by –1. However, the same method cannot be immediately used again so the next attempt to defatigue the unit will need to be something different.

Sometimes a call to arms is sufficient to refocus the crew. The unit's commander may use Leadership to get the crew to refocus. This might take the form of a rousing speech or the imposition of harsh discipline, depending on the character of the commander. A Difficult (10+) Leadership check reduces Fatigue Index by –1D but can be attempted only once per ticket.

A short break of at least three days in a suitable recreation facility or a friendly city will reduce Fatigue Index by –1D but only for unit members who get to enjoy it. If one platoon is left on guard at base when the rest go to the rear, its members do not benefit and may become resentful. The end result will be some personnel being less Fatigued and others more so, for an overall zero result – and there is the chance that unfair treatment will reduce MOR. The answer is to rotate the entire formation through R&R, although this means the sub-units still at the sharp end may be forced to fill in for their missing comrades.

A good break of at least a week doing something other than normal duty reduces Fatigue Index to zero, but again only for those who can enjoy it. Rotating the entire unit through enough downtime to refresh them is normally done at the end of a ticket. The Travellers will have to be quite creative if they want to build a large-scale vacation into their mission planning, although some tickets include such an event as a perk – usually in return for a low hiring fee.

A break of this sort 'cures' all fatigue effects except a breakdown. An individual who is in such a mess that they cannot perform their duties will not recover over the course of a week's holiday. Instead, they will improve to some extent but retain quirks and potentially dangerous habits. These might include sloppiness about weapons safety and other potentially lethal problems or just a general lack of care about whatever task the individual is assigned.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

CFS is a recognised mental illness and one that military doctors are careful to monitor. Small mercenary units may not have the facilities to do so, however, and at the same time they tend to operate in a more intense environment as they move from one conflict zone to another. Some personnel are more prone to fatigue than others and some do not recover as quickly when rest or diversion is available. A CFS sufferer may try to 'keep it together' and do their job, and may manage to conceal their symptoms or go undiagnosed by an inattentive medical staff.

CFS is grounds for removal from a position of authority, so military officers are sensitive to accusations they are suffering from excess fatigue. Those who have not been spotted in time may 'crack' at a dangerous moment, adding to the Travellers' troubles. The breakdown may be graphic, with a unit member stealing a vehicle and careering away on a high-speed joyride to… anywhere but here. Far more often it is insidious, causing the sufferer to freeze rather than acting or to make decisions in a dangerously risk-averse manner.

An inventive Referee can use CFS in a number of ways, even if it is not actually present. For example, the client appoints a liaison officer who once held high rank and clearly knows his stuff. There are rumours that he was induced to resign after developing chronic CFS and that he remains both unstable and resentful of those will holding combat commands.

Bases and Fortifications

Mercenary forces typically operate out of local facilities. These may be a pre-existing military base or major installation such as the downport. If so, facilities are rarely a problem. Whilst not an ideal situation, operating out of a port or even an industrial transportation terminal is nothing new for most mercenary units. There are no penalties for operating out of a temporary base of this sort providing the unit is well supplied and not working out of such a facility on a permanent basis.

In the field, a unit often has to make do with what it can improvise or requisition. It is possible to create a temporary forward operating base by moving the local population out of a village or part of a town and taking over the buildings. This can cause resentment but often there is little alternative. Mercenaries can live in tents and portable shelters and these are usually relatively comfortable. A TL9+ tent village has basic air conditioning, cooking facilities, freshers and even the capability to do laundry. The ability to obtain clean, dry clothes is regularly cited as one of the factors that keeps mercenaries from wanting to desert.

Whilst tents and lightweight shelters are easily transportable, they do not offer much protection from enemy action and little from thievery. This is a problem almost everywhere mercenaries might operate. Sometimes it is members of the mercenary unit doing the stealing but more commonly it is local people or allied troops helping themselves to the mercenaries' supplies and even weapons.

Much can be done to make a tent-base more secure. Prefabricated fence sections or wire entanglements can create an exclusion zone, which can be monitored by inexpensive cameras and alarm systems. Sandbags are cheap enough and dirt is free. The laborious task of filling the bags is made easy by the purchase of a dedicated digger/filler robot. These devices are high on the must-have list for most mercenary units.

Most mercenary units practice 'camp drill' over and over until siting and setting up a camp can be completed within a few minutes of coming to a halt. Fences and wire can be in place in an hour, with sandbag walls going up as fast as soldiers can stack them. This is day-to-day life for a mercenary in the field and not generally considered particularly onerous unless the unit is making frivolous movements. One possible downside to this relative ease of creating a temporary base is that personnel come to expect it. Most will tolerate sleeping rough if necessary but 'bivouacking' means something quite different to a TL10 mercenary than it does to a TL2 soldier.

Improvised, Prepared and Strong positions can be put together with the unit's own resources but sometimes it is necessary to construct a more substantial defensive installation. Once the mercenaries start wanting concrete bunkers and vehicle-proof obstacles special equipment is required. It is possible to make do with civilian construction equipment but specialist engineering vehicles make the work so much quicker.

As a rule of thumb, times indicate how long it takes for a unit of a given size to build a position for itself. This time is halved if the position faces only in one direction. Civilian construction equipment allows Constructed, Fortress and Citadel level buildings to be produced as shown on the Fortification Construction Times table. Without at least this level of equipment it will be near-impossible to create such a structure. Specialist engineering units halve the time required but still require suitable equipment which may have to be requisitioned. An engineering unit equipped with fortification-building gear halves the time again but such formations are rare and expensive to maintain.

This assumes a Dumb fortification consisting only of basic structures and features; concrete-lined obstacle ditches and weapon emplacements, solid bunkers with no lighting or amenities other than firing slits. If a Powered fortification is required the time to build it is not greatly increased if prefabricated wiring and plumbing packages are available. If these have to be constructed from locally available items the work will take up to five times as long. Powered fortifications have electrically operated weapon traverse, lights for internal use and powerful spotlights to illuminate intruders but little in the way of electronics. A Smart fortification has an integrated electrical and electronic system with good data-sharing between sensors and weapon systems, a central plotting and coordination chamber and a high level of habitability.

Dumb fortifications do not grant a DM to deal with electronic warfare attacks or to detect intruders, as they have no electrical or electronic systems at all. A Powered base grants no DM against electronic warfare attacks but checks to detect intruders receive DM+2 due to cleared areas, lights and so forth. A Smart base grants DM+2 against electronic warfare and DM+4 to detect intruders. It may also have automated defensive systems.

Dumb, Powered and Smart status does not affect the ability of the fortification to resist damage and protect those within. Those characteristics, and the DM granted in combat resolution, are defined by the level of intricacy and overbuilding that went into its construction, rated as Constructed, Fortress and Citadel. The capacity of a fortification is based on the number of infantry platoons that can make use of it.

Constructed, Fortress and Citadel level bases are described on page 96. A Field Base is a lightly fortified installation intended primarily to serve as a logistics and rest hub for the force. It incorporates some solid defensive structures but makes much use of simple field expedients such as earth trenches and sandbags.

Fortification Construction Times

Type	Sophistication	Time (Days)
Field Base (+6)	Dumb	2
Field Base (+6)	Powered	3
Field Base (+6)	Smart	4
Constructed (+8)	Dumb	4
Constructed (+8)	Powered	5
Constructed (+8)	Smart	6
Fortress (+10)	Dumb	8
Fortress (+10)	Powered	10
Fortress (+10)	Smart	12
Citadel (+12)	Dumb	14
Citadel (+12)	Powered	16
Citadel (+12)	Smart	18

Time is per platoon the installation can house. Halve the construction time for specialist engineering units and halve it again if the unit has fortress-building equipment. A company-sized fortification takes four times as long to build as a platoon-sized one and a battalion-sized fortification requires 16 times as long as one intended to house a platoon. Thus if a company-sized engineering unit with specialist fortress-building equipment is engaged to construct a Smart Citadel sized fortification for a battalion, it will need to produce 16 platoon-equivalents of fortification at 18 days each, halved for being an engineering unit and halved again for having fortress-building equipment. The installation will not be fully ready for 72 days. A civilian contractor could probably do it more quickly and would normally be hired for such a large project. However, impressive fortification complexes can be put together by mercenary units at need and it may be cheaper to hire mercenary builders who can defend themselves rather than civilian contractors and a mercenary unit to defend them.

Dealing With Fortifications

It is unlikely a mercenary unit will be tasked with the capture of an entire large fortified area in the course of a campaign. Far more commonly a fortification will be a plot element. For example, the Travellers might be tasked with making a commando strike to disable aerospace defence weapons sited in a citadel-type fortified area. Impressive as such fortifications are, they are geared up to defeat large-scale attacks rather than infiltration and raids. The enormous artillery weapons guarding the approaches to such a citadel become irrelevant once the commandos enter the fort itself. If they are detected in the killing zone, that is a different story – more than likely a short one.

In the case where the Travellers must launch a raid on a major fortification of this sort, the fortification may provide DMs to the chance of detecting the Travellers as they approach. The garrison's ECEI can be used for both detection and combat checks or its Support and Combat characterises may be more appropriate. If the Travellers are detected they may have to choose between aborting the mission and fighting through to the objective. Once on the objective the situation can be resolved using large-scale combat resolution if the Referee so chooses. If so, the fortification provides half its normal defensive DM. For example, a mercenary formation attacking a Fortress would suffer DM-5 for combat within the fortress, as opposed to the usual DM-10 if the Referee wanted to abstract the whole assault.

A fortified area can be reduced by bombardment. If the fortification has artillery weapons that can reach the mercenaries' position then combat resolution is required each phase and there is a possibility the mercenaries' weapons will be put out of action or they may even be forced to withdraw. If the fortification cannot shoot back it must simply endure and hope a counterattack can drive off its tormentors.

Bombarding a fortification takes time. Each phase of artillery bombardment, the attackers must pass an Average (8+) check using the unit's Artillery characteristic and Tech Level DM. The relative size of the forces provides a DM as usual – this is +/–4 for every level of size difference and in addition the fortification's defensive DM is applied. Obviously, a mercenary force with a single battery of TL7 howitzers is not going to break down a battalion-sized Fortress. A single battery is a platoon-equivalent, so the Travellers would need to produce a result of 8+ on 2D plus their Artillery and Tech Level DM, with DM-10 for the fortress and an additional DM-8 because its size is two levels greater than the artillery unit available.

On the other hand, a battalion-sized TL12 heavy artillery unit has a much better prospect. With no DM for relative size and DM+2 for Tech Level, this formation's Artillery DM is+ 3. It needs 8+, rolling with a net DM-5. This is attainable, although it may take several phases to achieve. Each success reduces the fortification's defensive DM by –1, until it is little more than a pile of rubble offering no defensive bonus to the defenders. The typical phase length for a battalion-sized unit is 2D hours (see page 86), so the attackers can attempt to weaken the fortification on average every seven hours. As its defensive DM comes down the fort will be wrecked more quickly.

If the Travellers choose to do more than simply pound away, the Referee may grant them additional DMs or reward mission success with damage to a fortification. For example, an intelligence coup might produce detailed plans of the fortification, which grant a positive DM on attempts to strike its weak points. Alternatively, the Travellers could launch a raid to blow up part of the fort, resulting in a reduction to its defensive DM. As always, those who just roll the dice can use the rules as presented but Travellers who create adventures for themselves should be rewarded by the Referee. Success is never automatic but clever Travellers should be able to find a way around most problems.

Finding solutions to difficult situations is what a mercenary campaign is all about. It may be that the destruction of a powerful fortress blocking the approaches to an enemy's capital is a critical moment in the campaign… but what can a mere 120-soldier infantry company do about it? They could sit about lamenting the lack of fortress-busting superweapons or they could make a plan and get on with working towards victory. After all, a complex series of raids, infiltrations and finally an assault on the main command bunker is a much better story than 'we waited a few weeks for the heavy artillery to come up and they blasted the fort apart'! A key element of mercenary campaigns is that clients hire mercenaries to do what local forces cannot. Figuring out how to make that happen is part of the bargain.

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY BOOK 2: RUNNING A MERCENARY FORCE

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

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INTRODUCTION

The mercenary trade is a business field like any other. Detractors claim that the mercenary's stock-in-trade is violence but the mercenaries themselves would more likely say they provide solutions. Again, this is just the same as any other field of business. A client who wants goods moving might charter space aboard a freighter; one that needs a facility might hire a construction firm. The latter is not hired 'to provide some building work' as this is not intrinsically of value to the client. What the client wants and will pay for is a solution to the problem of needing an installation at that place.

Similarly, the mercenary provides solutions to a wide range of problems. These can range from removal of a threat to restoring stability to a region; mercenaries might also solve the problem of how to create a long-term security presence by training locals to a suitable standard. Violence, when it occurs, is a means to an end just like landing a freighter at a starport or laying the foundations of a building. If it does not provide the outcome the client wants, the violence is pointless and probably counterproductive.

Good mercenary commanders are aware of this and will balance the ability to provide the client with what they want against the need to keep the unit and its members intact. A unit's reputation determines more than the sort of jobs it is offered – although this is critically important. Reputation can help protect against legal investigations, obtain good equipment and recruits, and all manner of other situations.

Some mercenaries operate in an entirely unregulated manner. This can have its advantages but the presence of oversight bodies helps ensure that clients pay the fee and the mercenaries do the job within acceptable parameters. It is common to have multiple mercenary factors in an area. Some will be planetary governments, some corporate bodies that work with mercenaries either as their primary field of business or alongside other concerns. The occasional full-service specialist corporation is encountered, which procures or produces weaponry, trains personnel and arranges hiring of mercenary forces. Such firms wield enormous political power by means of whom they will hire to and often have teams of advisors who guide local governments in procurement and policy decisions. If the firm has an agenda, these personnel will quietly push it whilst providing a good service to the client.

A professional mercenary unit will usually be affiliated with one or more of these mercenary factors, who have standards of conduct and performance that can vary from one to another. A unit's affiliations – and lack of them – can be an indicator of its likely capabilities and tendency to cause collateral damage. It is not uncommon for a mercenary factor to inspect or investigate a unit, although often the only penalty is a refusal to deal with the force in future. This is a serious matter as it reduces the quality and volume of employment likely to be offered to the unit. As a result, mercenary formations tend to have some sort of internal discipline system, which conforms to the requirements of the factors it is affiliated with. The same cannot be said with certainty of unregulated or unregistered mercenaries. Some are good and honourable but any band of trigger-happy yahoos can offer its services to those willing to pay for them. The results are... variable.

RESOURCES

This book shows you how a mercenary force is raised, maintained, expanded and subdivided, if necessary. Four key resources are necessary to this process: Personnel, Credits, Materiel and Influence.

Personnel

Personnel are mostly trained soldiers, though some civilian specialists may be required or found to be useful. All units experience at least a low level of personnel turnover from casualties, retirements or members who have decided to take a job elsewhere. High turnover is usually a sign the unit is an unpleasant place to serve or takes unnecessarily high casualties. 'Casualties' in this context can include much more than combat injuries; a unit can suffer casualties through training accidents, non-combat incidents on deployment such as a collision between vehicles or sickness contracted whilst serving in an unpleasant environment. Well-run units keep all such casualties to a minimum.

Warriors, Heroes and Soldiers

The personnel who make up a mercenary unit ultimately define its character. A unit that accepts recruits who cannot accept military discipline will end up becoming an example of the stereotypical cash-for-violence rabble that springs to mind when most people hear the word ‘mercenary’. A force that is desperate for recruits might take psychologically fragile individuals, or those so lacking in common sense, which can become a liability but most recruiting processes are designed to weed out the obviously unsuitable candidates. An ideal mercenary soldier is willing to deal out violence without hesitation or undue reflection but is professional enough to only do it when really necessary.

‘Warriors’ can be useful to a unit that can grant them some autonomy, and manage their actions to keep them beneficial, but a typical mercenary commander would prefer someone with less individual fighting ability who is more able to function as part of a team. Likewise, ‘heroes’ are not liked by other mercenaries for two reasons. They tend to get themselves and often others killed doing something that a more professional soldier would leave alone or retreat from and they create a false impression in the minds of clients that all mercenaries should be that gung-ho. The fact is that a professional mercenary is a soldier, willing to fight for whatever it is the client wants but mindful of the fact that dying for a cause is bad enough – dying for someone else’s cause is just stupid.

Despite this filtering process, the personnel in a unit are unlikely to be perfect. Mercenaries have an adage, borrowed from fighter-pilots of a previous era, that:

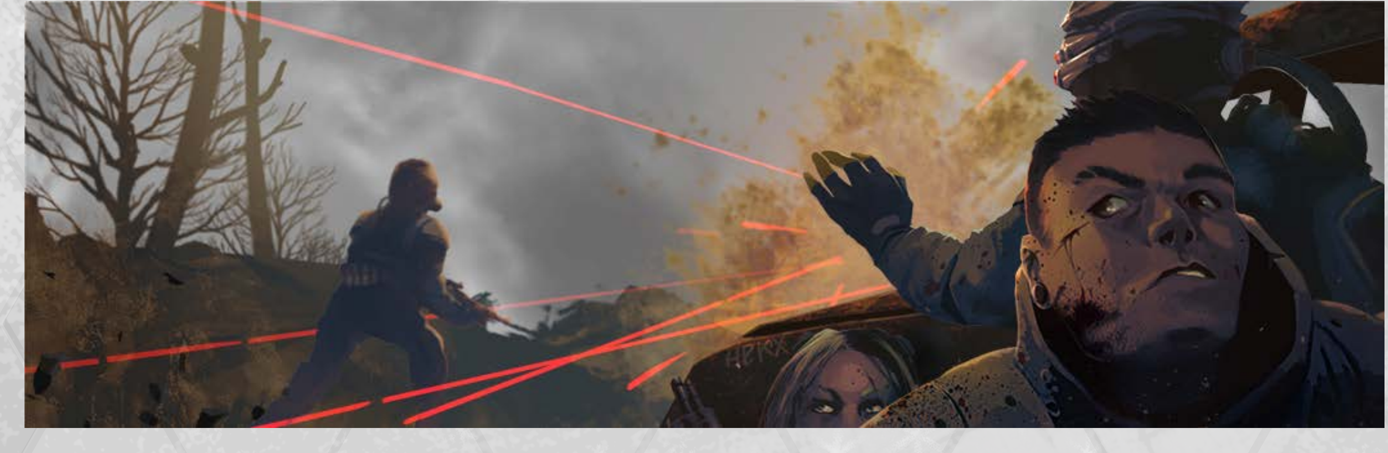
In a properly trained unit there are about 5–10% really talented people who stand above everyone else. About half of the others are competent and reliable, and the remainder are body-bag fillers. Who is which is not always readily apparent until the unit gets into action.

It is also wisely said that:

Warriors fight fiercely, heroes gamble… and soldiers stack the deck.

Although rather harsh, this adage has proven true over and over again. In some units there is a tradition of not learning someone’s name until after their first firefight. Most such units have an insulting term for the new guy and ‘earning your name’ is a rite of passage for many mercenaries.

The fact is that anyone can be unlucky but fortune favours the professional whose head is in the game and has solid battlefield skills. Reckless or incompetent comrades are a liability and might force a choice between taking a horrendous risk to save their sorry ass or leaving them to their fate. Weak unit members might shape up if they live long enough and experts can become body-bag fillers if they lose their edge. A mercenary unit and everyone in it plays the odds and the successful ones tend to be those who know an ace when they see one.



Attitudes vary towards those who leave a unit for another mercenary force. In some cases this can be a source of pride, such as when a mid-level officer is headhunted to lead a 'lesser' force. Indeed, some mercenary units act as an on-the-job advanced training facility and routinely supply officers or groups of enlisted personnel to other formations. Some even raise additional sub-units and break them off when they are ready. On the other hand, mercenaries tend to be loyal to their own and may resent someone who leaves the unit. Much depends on the culture of the force.

As an asset, Personnel are rated either as Recruits or Replacements. A Recruit is someone who has had minimal or no training but could be shoved into a role of absolutely necessary. A Replacement is someone who has received enough training – or arrived with sufficient experience – that they can join a unit and function well within it more or less straight away. A unit's personnel pool should record these values separately.

Credits

Credits are simply money, although this may be in the form of cash, bullion, electronic balances at a bank or a line of credit. Mercenary units sometimes include a salvage and reclamation group dedicated to reducing operational losses and perhaps gaining extra cash from battlefield salvage. A unit might even raise credit with a loan secured against its own heavy equipment, although this is a sign things are not going well. Whatever the situation, mercenary units' money should be tracked as Credits – representing liquid assets or instantly available spending power – and Assets that represent collateral that can be used to get money in a variety of ways.

Materiel

Materiel represents hardware that can be used to put combat forces together, one way or another. A stockpile of rations and supplies would be considered Materiel, as would a tank or the components of one. Materiel is a way of abstracting the ability of a unit to fix equipment or get a necessary piece of kit into the field without having to order one from a supplier several parsecs away. Materiel does not have to be specified when recorded, although some specific items may be noted if they are in ready-to-use working order. For example, if a mercenary unit scavenges the wreckage of an enemy artillery battery and gets a load of artillery and transport components, plus a single gun that can be easily returned to working order, it has the choice of recording the gun as a specific item or just entering its Materiel value into the records.

Influence

Influence is a nebulous quantity, representing the ability of the unit to get someone to do what it wants. Many transactions do not need Influence to make them happen – a registered mercenary formation can order a million rounds of ammunition from its supplier with no more difficulty than buying a box of doughnuts from an online store. However, when a unit wants to circumvent regulations or obtain something unusual, Influence comes to the fore.

Influence is tracked like any other characteristic and is rated 0–15. It generates a DM as normal, which is used whenever the unit attempts to negotiate an under-the-table deal or tries to get something it is not supposed to have. This includes attempting to suborn enemy personnel in order to gain information or persuade port officials not to look in those crates. Up-front and honest dealings use Reputation instead.

In addition, Influence can be spent for one-off benefits. For example, no matter how desperately the unit needs a nuclear warhead it is unlikely to be able to buy one. Most *Traveller* universes place strict limits on the sale and use of such weaponry and just finding someone who has them and is willing to sell can be a challenge. By spending a point of Influence, and permanently losing it, the unit gains the ability to make one attempt to locate a vendor. This does not guarantee success and will more than likely generate an adventure. The Travellers will need to present a plan for how they intend to find a weapon for sale (or in a place it can be stolen from), spend a point of Influence then play out the resulting situation. The Referee should not take spending a point of Influence as a guarantee of success.

Influence 0 is a special case. A unit with Influence 0 has become 'untouchable' in the sense that nobody will deal with its members. One way to achieve this is to make use of the nuke obtained through the use of Influence against an innocent civilian target or some similar atrocity. Influence can drop to zero due to tremendously bad actions on the part of the mercenaries or possibly the effects of hostile propaganda. It represents a disaster for the force, which must be remedied as soon as possible.

Reputation

Reputation is described in *Book 1*. It provides a DM to overt and legal dealings in the same way Influence does with less public matters. Reputation can be spent to allow an attempt at something unusual, such as persuading an important officer the Travellers are trying to recruit to at least look at the deal on offer.

If an arrangement would be considered disloyal or illicit, Influence is used. If it is purely about perception of the unit, Reputation provides the DM and the opportunity.

Like Influence, Reputation can drop to 0. Both can be zeroed by atrocities but it is possible one or the other will retain its value. For example, a unit that has disgraced itself but still has leverage on some officials retains its Influence; one that has burned its bridges regarding under-the-table suppliers or clients might still have a good public Reputation.

Reputation for mercenary units begins at a value of CEI –1D but can be modified when the unit is formed (see page 11). CEI is based on the unit's training level, as discussed on page 16.

THE CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

Depending on how the campaign is to be run, the Referee might want to create a few other entities in the mercenary field. Some of these may be rival mercenary groups, some may be personalities or governments. The Referee may also wish to create contacts for the Travellers to cultivate. This is not always necessary, especially in an episodic campaign where the Travellers move from ticket-to-ticket without much interaction in between. In such cases a merchant factor or rival mercenary unit can simply be added when they are encountered but doing preparation will allow the Travellers to create their own adventures in some cases and results in a more realistic campaign environment.

Mercenary units and government forces can be rated using the system on page 13 of *Book 1*, with a paragraph or two of related information. These forces might be encountered repeatedly or used as templates for hostiles equipped similarly.

Mercenary factors and arms brokers are an important part of the mercenary trade and it may be necessary to win their trust or establish a reputation for professionalism before they will deal with the Travellers' unit. After all, nobody wants the authorities asking why they sold bombardment missiles to a bunch of incompetent mooks.

Each broker or source of equipment has their own requirements and capabilities. The Referee should decide what equipment each can provide, at what Tech Level, and how scrupulous they are about legalities. This is recorded as a difficulty associated with Persuade checks to get around the rules.

For example, Benny the Gunrunner is notorious for selling anything to anyone and has a difficulty level of Easy (6+). It is not hard to persuade him (using Persuade skill and the unit's Influence) to sell weapons to the Travellers. Benny can only get small arms most of the time, although occasionally he has larger hardware available. He also has known connections with some of the nastier insurgent movements in the region. Benny is an easy source of routine resupplies up to TL8 but his sinister connections could lead to complications if the Referee so chooses. But, 'if nobody else will deal with you, buy from Benny!'.

CHAPTER-ONE

FORMING A UNIT

A mercenary force can start out in all manner of ways. It might be a unit that has gone rogue or been orphaned by the destruction of its parent state. It might be a part of a world's regular armed forces offered for hire when not required at home or a corporate body specialising in military operations. Most units, however, are specifically raised to be mercenary forces. Those that are not need to pass through a transition period where they adjust to the new environment. Mercenary units of any size need to be more self-contained and self-reliant than regular army units and for this reason it is common to find even small mercenary units with a degree of combined-arms capability. A regular infantry battalion can call upon artillery support from the rest of the army it belongs to; mercenaries may not have this luxury.

STRUCTURE OF THE UNIT

Very small units do not need much in the way of organisation. In a squad or section sized formation everyone has a primary job but wears other hats when necessary and command structures can be very simple. Once a force grows beyond about a dozen members such a loose organisational structure becomes a liability. This is particularly true when sub-units in different places or with differing specialities have to work together. An effective force needs a clear command structure, communications protocols and standardised ways of doing things. Without this, it is possible to bodge along on a moment-by-moment basis but the force can dissolve into chaos under pressure. A formal and well-understood structure does not eliminate this possibility but does improve resilience.

Formations are built up of sub-units, which are in turn built from smaller units. The structure and size of these tends to be roughly equivalent, although names can vary considerably. When a mercenary unit is formed, it and its sub-units are effectively placeholders that are filled out with personnel and equipment. The time and effort required to put together a force of any given level is abstracted using Personnel, Credits and Materiel.

On the Unit Structure table, the cost listed creates a formation as a placeholder or cadre, with just enough personnel to run its administrative and command functions. Such a cadre formation can then be filled out with personnel and equipment to whatever specification the Travellers may have. Vehicles and equipment must be bought and assigned a sufficient crew. Materiel costs include uniforms, personal communications equipment and other standard field kit but no weapons.

Costs given are for the command and key personnel in a formation of each size, plus some additional personnel to carry out simple tasks. These ideally will have learned basic skills and be considered Replacements but a placeholder formation can be put together from mostly raw recruits if necessary. Note that costs given are for the unit itself but not sub-units; a battalion cadre has no companies or platoons to command. These must be raised separately but can make use of personnel available from the next unit above in many situations. It is entirely acceptable to create provisional sub-units, bring them up to size, then break them down to create a full set of specialist sub-units.

Unit Structure

Unit Type	Requirements (Cadre)	Notes
Squad or Equivalent	Replacements: 1 Materiel: 1 Credits: Cr10000	Minimal unit composing a single fire team, group of specialists or a single vehicle or artillery piece and crew. Squads and Sections are interchangeable as sub-units of a platoon.
Section/Lance	Replacements: 2 Materiel: 2 Credits: Cr25000	Small tactical formation typically comprising 2–3 squads or 2 minor vehicles or pieces of equipment, or a single major vehicle or piece of equipment, plus crew.
Platoon	Replacements: 4 Replacements or Recruits: 4 Materiel: 5 Credits: Cr100000	Small tactical formation typically comprising 3–5 section-equivalents.
Company	Replacements: 4 Replacements or Recruits: 8 Materiel: 75 Credits: Cr500000	Tactical formation typically comprising 3–5 platoon-equivalents.
Battalion	Replacements: 8 Replacements or Recruits: 24 Materiel: 400 Credits: MCr2	Tactical formation typically comprising 3–5 company-equivalents.
Brigade	Replacements: 12 Replacements or Recruits: 72 Materiel: 2000 Credits: MCr10	The largest mercenary formation likely to be encountered, a brigade will normally contain 3–5 battalion-equivalents.

Example

If a band of Travellers want to form a platoon-sized unit they will need four people with at least basic military training to be the command team and key personnel of the unit and four more to run around doing tasks an untrained person can manage. They also need to scrape together Materiel 5 and Cr100000 to outfit the force with uniforms, camp gear and the like. They might also want to find some weaponry.

Having done this, the Travellers will have the framework of a platoon and can fill it out with personnel. A typical platoon has four section-equivalents and, in the case of infantry, a nominal staffing level of around 32–35 people. The Travellers could just find enough recruits to bring the force up to this level without creating sub-units but this will make the force inefficient and prone to serious errors. They decide to make use of what they have available and to institute formal sub-units even if some of them are just placeholders for now.

The Travellers and their immediate associates number 13 trained military, naval and paramilitary-service personnel, with a fair amount of cash on hand and access to a stockpile of Materiel. They also have a militarised air/raft and a wheeled light artillery vehicle they picked up by means better left undisclosed.

The Travellers decide to build themselves an all-arms force with what they have and shake it out into a more conventional format in the course of their careers.

Command Section

The Travellers form a section-sized unit containing three of the Travellers as commander, executive officer and electronic warfare expert. The commander takes the rank of captain, which might be a bit high for a platoon-sized unit but is unlikely to attract adverse comment and the executive officer is appointed lieutenant. If the unit expands, the commanders might move to a platoon-command detachment and appoint a sergeant to lead First Section.

The electronic warfare technician was a corporal in the army and remains one in the new unit, although suddenly he is in charge of a whole unit's – albeit limited – capabilities rather than jump-performing tasks as ordered. With the command team this uses up three of the four Replacement personnel required for the platoon, which is acceptable since the leaders of the Command Section are also leaders of the unit as a whole. It is more than enough to satisfy the need for 2 Replacements in this Section. A cost of 2 Materiel and Cr25000 must also be paid.

The Command Section is assigned the air/raft as a reconnaissance and liaison platform and will be fitted with a pintle mounted weapon as soon as one is available. The Command Section has an intended strength of 8 personnel so still needs 5. Ideally these will be trained Replacements but untrained Recruits could be used at need.

First Section

First Section is intended to be a 'rifle' section, with eight infantry personnel in two squads of four. These squads do not need to be formed as separate units as the section structure is sufficient to cover such a small unit. First Section needs 2 Replacements, 2 Materiel and Cr25000. The money and basic equipment is not a problem and the available replacements include a friend of the Travellers who left the army with the rank of captain. She is appointed leader of First Section with a rank of sergeant and is assisted by an experienced rifleman who is given the rank of corporal to lead the other half of the section. If the unit grows big enough, this captain-turned-sergeant will likely be given a rapid promotion but for now the platoon only rates two officers.

Second Section

Second Section is intended to be a 'rifle' section but for now is going to act as a placeholder until more personnel are recruited. It is formed as a unit, costing 2 Materiel and Cr25000, but is assigned only 2 personnel. One is an excellent marksman with no leadership skills; the other is an infantry soldier who will accompany the marksman as a security element. This 'section' uses up two more Replacements but will not be filled out until someone can be recruited to lead it and sufficient personnel can be found. In the meantime Second Section will be used as a reconnaissance and support asset under the control of the Command Section.

Support Section

The Support Section is built around the artillery weapon. This is carried in a light armoured vehicle that requires a crew of three. Two of the replacements assigned to the Section have experience of military vehicles or artillery; the third was actually a police officer but has leadership potential so is appointed vehicle and section commander. Creating the Support Section uses up 3 Replacements, Cr25000 and 2 Materiel.

Further Assignments

So far the Travellers have created a platoon-sized formation with four section-sized sub-units. They have used up 10 of their 13 Replacement-level personnel and spent Cr200000 plus 13 Materiel to do so. Assigning the three remaining Replacements to First Section brings it up to five out of a nominal strength of eight. The Travellers are now in command of an extremely weak 13-person 'platoon' with a light artillery weapon that can be used for direct fire support or even as a light tank against lower-tech opponents.

The Travellers set themselves the task of recruiting personnel to fill out their unit. First, they want First Section up to strength, which will require just three competent people. They wish to recruit someone suitable as sergeants in charge of Second Section and bring this section up to its 'paper' strength of eight. This is six personnel of whom at least one is an above-average Replacement.

The next goal is to move the artillery piece to the Command Section, leaving its current leader in place and adding seven more personnel to create a third rifle section. When this is complete the platoon will have a command/support section containing an artillery piece plus three rifle sections of eight personnel each and will be able to call itself a combined-arms platoon. All this will take is finding 16 more people with at least basic infantry skills and of course, arming them. As the Travellers soon find, weapons are not usually the biggest cost associated with a mercenary formation.

STANDARD UNITS

For ease of book-keeping, units that are close to the standard model of 4-element sub-units can be assumed to have standardised costs. The table opposite includes the cost of all sub-units and assumes key personnel requirements overlap considerably. The result is a skeleton formation with minimal fighting power but capable of receiving drafts of personnel to bring it up to strength. It is always more efficient to create higher-level formations than multiple lower-level ones and also more skill-intensive to create many small formations. This is because many jobs can be done by people with just one or two skills in a large formation but a small unit needs multiskilled people to cover the many requirements created by lacking a parent formation.

BRINGING IN ASSETS

Travellers who intend to be mercenaries, rather than typical adventurers, can convert some of their mustering-out benefits into equipment and Materiel. It is assumed that the potential mercenaries either began planning to create a mercenary force during their career or used their contacts to gather whatever resources they could. Whilst anyone can try to get a mercenary force together, most lack the contacts or the credibility to do so.

Unit Structure

Unit Type	Requirements (Cadre)	Notes
Squad or Equivalent	Replacements: 1 Materiel: 1 Credits: Cr10000	Squads do not have to be formed as sub-units of a section. Costs only need be paid when the unit is formed as a sub-unit of a platoon or as a unit in its own right.
Section/Lance	Replacements: 2 Materiel: 2 Credits: Cr25000	The smallest mercenary combat unit likely to be encountered.
Platoon	Replacements: 6 Replacements or Recruits: 4 Materiel: 13 Credits: Cr200000	Platoon key personnel and equipment, plus four section-equivalents.
Company	Replacements: 8 Replacements or Recruits: 16 Materiel: 75 Credits: Cr500000	Company-level key personnel plus four platoon-equivalents.
Battalion	Replacements: 16 Replacements or Recruits: 48 Materiel: 400 Credits: MCr2	Battalion-level key personnel plus four company-equivalents.
Brigade	Replacements: 24 Replacements or Recruits: 96 Materiel: 2000 Credits: MCr10	Brigade-level key personnel plus four battalion-equivalents.

Upon mustering out, some or all of a Traveller's Benefit rolls may be taken on the Mercenary Assets table and the resources of all involved Travellers can be combined. It is not necessary to use all the available items at once; for example, a Traveller who has some personnel available can hold on to this Benefit until the unit requires some additional infantry soldiers or whatever other niche needs filling.

Former Military (Army and Marines) Travellers may swap any or all of their Benefit rolls one-for-one for rolls on the Mercenary Assets table and the Traveller's final rank may be used as a DM. A former sergeant-major might well bring more to the table than a lieutenant, although the officer is likely to have better connections.

Former Naval and Paramilitary Travellers may swap any or all of their Benefit rolls two-for-one for rolls on the Mercenary Assets table. The Traveller's final rank may be used as a DM. Paramilitary careers in this context include law enforcement, security, scouts and the like.

All other Travellers may swap any or all of their Benefit rolls three-for-one for rolls on the Mercenary Assets table and may not use their final rank as a DM on any column but General Assets. A senior merchant or corporate official might have some very useful contacts or influence but they are unlikely to be in possession of a tank.

If a Traveller has served in different careers, the Referee may allow them to make their Mercenary Assets rolls as if they had served their entire career in the 'highest' category of careers they qualify for. Note that a certain kind of Traveller might try to exploit this system, perhaps by obtaining large amounts of military equipment, then selling it and starting a normal adventuring career. These rules were developed to allow Travellers who want to play a mercenary campaign to do so. The Referee should not allow those who do not use them as a get-rich-quick scam.

The Mercenary Assets table indicates what each Traveller brought when the unit was formed and is used as standard mustering out. A Traveller who takes no cash benefits has no money of their own but can draw living expenses and/or a salary from the assets of the nascent mercenary force. All credit and equipment belongs to the unit as a whole once committed. Ownership of the unit can be agreed among the Travellers in any proportion they see fit. One way to determine a precise percentage of ownership is to total assets in each category and assign ownership based on how much of each item the Traveller contributed.

Mercenary Assets

1D	General Assets	Recruiting and Equipping	Hardware
1	Credit: Cr50000	Materiel: 2D	Hardware Budget: Cr2Dx10000
2	Influence +1	Personnel: 1D Replacements	Personnel: D3 Replacements and D3 Recruits plus Materiel: 1D
3	Personnel: 1D Recruits	Materiel: 4D	Hardware Budget: Cr2Dx25000
4	Credit: Cr200000	Personnel: 2D Replacements	Personnel: 1D Replacements and 1D Recruits plus Materiel: 2D
5	Personnel: 1D Replacements	Materiel: 6D	Hardware Budget: Cr2Dx50000
6	Influence +2	Personnel: 3D Replacements	Personnel: 1D Replacements and 1D Recruits plus Materiel: 3D
7	Credit: Cr500000	Materiel: 8D	Hardware Budget: Cr2Dx100000
8	Personnel: 1D Replacements and 2D Recruits	Personnel: 4D Replacements	Personnel: 2D Replacements and 2D Recruits plus Materiel: 4D
9	Influence +3	Materiel: 10D	Hardware Budget: Cr2Dx250000
10	Credit: MCr1	Personnel: 5D Replacements	Personnel: 3D Replacements and 3D Recruits plus Materiel: 6D
11	Personnel: 2D Replacements and 4D Recruits	Materiel: 12D	Hardware Budget: Cr2Dx500000
12	Influence +4	Personnel: 6D Replacements	Hardware Budget: MCr2Dx1 plus Influence +1

Credit represents working capital in some form. This might be cash in the bank or a line of credit secured on something valuable. Credit can be used for any of a unit's purchases or expenses but cannot simply be taken as cash and spent in the nearest bar.

Personnel represents a number of people – either trained Replacements or untrained Recruits – who are available to join the unit whenever the Travellers want them. They can be held in reserve at no cost, probably working whatever jobs they can get while they wait for an opening in the unit, but once part of the unit they must be paid and equipped. This includes personnel in training.

Influence represents the individual Traveller's contacts and leverage over them. It will be used to calculate the unit's starting Influence.

Hardware Budget represents the weaponry, vehicles and heavy equipment the Travellers can bring to the unit. It is not necessarily cash; this is just a convenient measure of value. Hardware Budget includes that broken-down grav tank the Traveller has finally finished fixing up, stashes of arms and equipment concealed during active service and any other hardware the Travellers have acquired. It does not have to be allocated all at once but can be put towards any hardware purchase the unit makes. It cannot be converted to cash.

UNIT INFLUENCE

The Influence wielded by a unit makes it possible to obtain equipment others cannot get. When the unit is formed its starting Influence is equal to the final rank its commander held before mustering out, plus the Influence of the most influential Traveller in the unit. In this case, enlisted final rank is considered important but inferior to commissioned rank. If the commander is a former non-commissioned officer, their final rank is halved (rounding down) when making this calculation.

The resulting value is Unit Influence, which provides a DM to carry out actions like persuading a broker to sell weaponry to the Travellers or investigators to delay their work a day or two so that evidence can be concealed. Once determined, Unit Influence is tracked and can increase or decrease as a result of the Travellers' actions. The Influence wielded by individual Travellers is important to the unit even if they were not the most influential at the formation of the force.

Using Influence

Whenever the Travellers want to influence someone on behalf of their unit, they can use its Unit Influence DM to do so. This includes completely legitimate transactions such as asking for a discount on a bulk shipment of replacement boots and belt buckles. In such a situation one of the Travellers would use their Persuade skill, with the unit's Influence DM as an additional modifier. The discount might be 5% per point of Effect. This is a routine use of Influence and can be done at any time Influence is relevant.

If the Travellers want to ask for something dangerous or illegal, they will have to create the opportunity. This requires permanently expending a point of Influence, which is not recovered. A unit that runs its Unit Influence down in this manner will eventually struggle to persuade anyone of anything but Unit Influence can be increased in some circumstances. In the interim, each of the Travellers who has Influence can spend these points before using up the Unit Influence. This includes the most influential Traveller; once Unit Influence is established it is an independent characteristic.

Spending Influence does not allow the Travellers to do the impossible and some actions will not even be considered. For example, a merchant might be persuaded to allow the Travellers to buy restricted weapons without the correct licenses but the merchant is unlikely to let them have nuclear weapons even if they could be obtained. If the Travellers want something so illegal, they will have to do some work to get it. They might use Influence to obtain information on a badly secured storage facility guided by miserable conscripts who have not been paid for months, then work on persuading a corrupt quartermaster to provide access and look the other way. This will require creativity and effort on the part of the Travellers, and ultimately an adventure, with spending Influence points as an enabler.

Once the unit has no Influence left it has used up all its favours and has no useful dirt on anyone. The Referee can of course create situations in which the Travellers can get more Influence or they might even come up with their own methods. Smart and proactive Travellers might have their intelligence people looking out for the right contacts to cultivate or opportunities to carry out their own missions in order to get leverage over someone useful.

Forming a Unit

These rules are intended to allow Travellers to put together a small mercenary force. It will typically be section, platoon or company sized, and may have to be formed understrength then worked up over the course of a campaign. It will be possible for a typical band of Travellers to put together a unit that is small and well equipped, or a larger one that needs to find better equipment. This is part of the campaign and the Referee should not be too generous in allowing the Travellers to get whatever they want. A 'hungry' unit has to take difficult jobs and take risks, which leads to adventure.

The process of forming a unit begins with an assessment of the Materiel, credits and personnel available and progresses to the formation of the unit as a placeholder. The Tech Level of the unit is determined at this point, as the TL of the primary source of equipment and weaponry. The unit now contains as many people as the Travellers have assigned, equipped with uniforms, boots, tents, communicators and the odd shovel, but no weapons.

Once the structure and staffing level of the unit are established, the Travellers can go about training and arming their force. Weapons, vehicles and support equipment are purchased with Credits or from the Hardware Budget. Once this process is complete the CBAS characteristics of the force will be indicated by its equipment level, CEI can be determined from training level and Morale is based on CEI. The unit's Reputation is determined, based on CEI and the actions taken by the Travellers; and at this point the force is ready for action.

CHAPTER-TWO

RECRUITING AND TRAINING

No matter how high-tech a force might be, its personnel are its most important asset. The majority of mercenary forces simply do not have time to train personnel from scratch, so tend to recruit from those who have left a regular force. These are not always army personnel. Former starship crewmembers can be made effective ground fighters with some guidance from experienced colleagues but someone who has not had at least basic military training will lack the 'military mindset' and have no framework from which to hang new skills on.

A prospective recruit needs a certain skillset that can only be instilled by proper basic training. This does include weapons handling but combat skills are only a small part of what recruiters are looking for. A useable recruit knows how to live as a soldier whether in barracks or the field. They can take care of themselves and their equipment and can comprehend the jargon or verbal shorthand used to convey orders and information. Close-order drill is unlikely to be much use unless the unit hires out to clients who prefer parades to firefights, however the prospective recruit must be comfortable taking orders and functioning within the confines of a military force.

Only the largest units have their own training facilities, although some have close relationships with a particular trainer or get a lot of personnel from one planetary army. In these cases there tends to be a steady flow of personnel but for most units there is always competition over who can snap up the most promising recruits and who gets whatever is left. A lot of this work is done by the recruiting factors, so for smaller units a good relationship with the factors is more important than actual skill at recruiting.

If the Travellers want to do their own recruiting they can go about it any way they please. Sometimes the outcome of an adventure or ticket will put the Travellers in a position to make an offer of employment but mostly they will need to have someone in the right place at the right time. That place is typically somewhere recently-soldiers will pass through, although passive advertising may also produce reasonable results. Advertising is less likely to produce the best applicants and sometimes results in multiple no-hopers attempting to join the unit.

A basic set of adverts in the relevant journals and datanet sites can be produced for negligible cost. It provides no DM to find recruits, nor to determine their quality. Going through a mercenary factor requires paying a fee to sign up their services and an additional amount per recruit. Factors do a little checking into people they recommend to a unit and can weed out the obvious no-hopers, although occasionally somebody slips through. A factor will provide a brief outline of the potential recruit's career so far, which is typically little more than known service, date and status of discharge and so forth. Factors do not hold try-outs or make strenuous attempts to verify claims made in the recruit's resume but do try to ensure the people they put forward are suitable.

Recruiting factors typically charge Cr100000 as a registry fee and will put forward recruits as they appear or when the Travellers request them. Specialists or those with impressive skills will command a large finding-fee. The typical mercenary recruit will be young, probably the product of a large planetary army. The recruit may have failed to adjust to civilian life or to find a suitable job after leaving the military, or may want some excitement and a decent salary for a few years before they settle down. Some may come from the navy or even non-military services such as law enforcement, especially if a unit needs specialist skills. Not surprisingly, mercenary units tend to maintain a recruiting presence in the sort of places military personnel pass through at the end of their service. This includes garrison towns and major interstellar transport hubs, especially in the wake of a war. Recruiters often descend on worlds that are downsizing their military, scooping up the best recruits before they disperse across the spaceways.

A significant proportion of mercenary recruiting is done through third-party factors, some of whom operate mercenary training facilities. These are geared to producing mercenaries, rather than soldiers of a particular state, but instil the same basic skillset with a few variations and omissions. Recruits coming from these mercenary schools tend not to know much about drill and pageantry but can fit into most mercenary forces without difficulty.

QUALITY OF PERSONNEL

The quality of personnel depends on their prior service and training. Under most circumstances the Travellers will be able to simply pay for a factor to find them the type of recruits they want, although top-end specialists are rarely found this way. A group of recruits is rated as if it were a detachment of the Travellers' unit and has a Detachment Efficiency Index (DEI) associated with it. The Personnel Quality table indicates the DEI of typical types of recruit and the costs associated with getting a factor to find them.

Personnel Quality

DEI	Example	Primary/Secondary Skills	Cost
0	Some people are completely unsuited to mercenary work. This will usually be obvious.	0/0	Cr50, if these are all the recruiter can find. The Travellers should expect problems.
1	Raw recruit, willing but with no training.	1/0	Cr100
2	Someone who has received orientation training but little more than that.	1/0	Cr250
3	Someone who has received part of a standard basic training package or who has come from a paramilitary career such as law enforcement or the scouts.	1+0/1+0	Cr400
4	Someone who has completed an abbreviated basic training or who has come from a space combat career such as the navy or a pirate band.	1+0/1+0	Cr750
5	A qualified but inexperienced soldier. This is the minimum level to be considered a Replacement rather than a Recruit.	1+0/1+0	Cr1000
6	A trained soldier with little operational experience.	2+1/1+1	Cr1500
7	A typical 1-term soldier.	2+1/1+1	Cr2500
8	A typical 2-term soldier.	2+1/1+1	Cr5000
9	A typical 3-term soldier.	3+1/1+1	Cr10000
10	A highly qualified specialist or expert.	3+1/1+1	Cr50000
11	The best personnel likely to be found on the recruiting circuit.	3+1/1+1	Cr250000
12	DEI 12+ will only be found in a few rare instances. Personnel of this calibre must be sought out individually.	3+1/2+1	Negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

Recruiter costs increase rapidly at the upper end. Most mercenary units expect to average Cr5000 per recruit, getting a mix of DEI 5–10 personnel in a batch. This fee does not go to the prospective mercenary; it is taken by the factor. Travellers who do their own recruiting do not need to pay this fee.

Integrating Recruits and Replacements

A force can absorb a few replacements without being unduly disrupted. If very poor personnel are added to a unit, disruption may occur. The process described below is used when the unit is being brought back up to strength. If it is being expanded, the process used is described on Page 67 of *Book 1*, under Weakening or Expanding Forces.

When a draft of new personnel arrives the unit must make an Average (8+) CEI check. If this is passed, CEI remains unchanged. If it is failed the Effect is applied as a reduction to the unit's CEI. This check is subject to the following DMs:
The receiving unit's CEI modifier and the modifier resulting from the average DEI of the new arrivals.
If less than 10% of the unit's strength are being replaced: No DM
If 11–20% of the unit's strength are being replaced: DM-2
If 21–30% of the unit's strength are ebbing replaced: DM-4
If more than 30% of the unit's strength are being replaced: DM-6

Assigning Skills

In general, it is not necessary to assign skills to specific individuals. If the Travellers are fielding a battalion sized force they do not have time to keep track of whether Corporal Jownes has Gun Combat 1 or 2; what they care about is whether the platoon can reach and capture its objective. In such situations all that matters is the DEI of the new recruits and how it affects the CEI of the force as a whole.

Individual Skills

Primary (Infantry)	Primary (Vehicle)	Primary (Artillery)	Primary (Support)	Secondary
Athletics	Drive	Electronics	Admin	Admin
Gun Combat	Flyer	Gun Combat	Drive	Advocate
Heavy Weapons	Gun Combat	Heavy Weapons	Electronics	Athletics
Melee	Heavy Weapons	Navigation	Explosives	Diplomat
Recon	Mechanic	Tactics	Investigate	Drive
Stealth	Navigation		Mechanic	Electronics
Tactics	Tactics		Navigation	Explosives
Vacc Suit			Steward	Flyer
			Tactics	Gun Combat
				Heavy Weapons
				Investigate
				Leadership
				Mechanic
				Melee
				Navigation
				Perception
				Recon
				Stealth
				Survival
				Tactics
				Vacc Suit

Where a unit member's specific skills are important, they can be assigned using the Individual Skills table. An individual might have additional skills; those presented here are military or mercenary-life related only. Primary skills are connected with the individual's main function whilst Secondary skills refer to supporting capabilities such as Stealth or Recon for combat troops. Specialist personnel will usually have a non-combat Primary skill such as Medic, Mechanic, Electronics or Admin, with their Secondary skill indicating combat competence.

Where more than one skill is listed, such as 3+1, this indicates additional skills from the same general category. For example, a Trained infantry soldier is listed as 2+1 Primary and 1+1 Secondary. A typical member of the unit might be assumed to have Gun Combat 2 plus Heavy Weapons 1 as Primary skills and Recon 1 plus Stealth 1 as Secondary skills. The soldier will have additional skills but this is an indicator of their primary combat-related capabilities.

Conducting Recruitment

A Traveller can conduct recruitment on their own or get a factor to do it for them. A factor provides a flat DM+2, whereas a Traveller may be able to obtain a higher DM – and in addition the finding-fee does not need to be paid. Either way, a recruiting attempt can be targeted or general. Each recruiting attempt takes roughly a month. The Travellers can recruit in multiple places in the same month so long as they have the contacts.

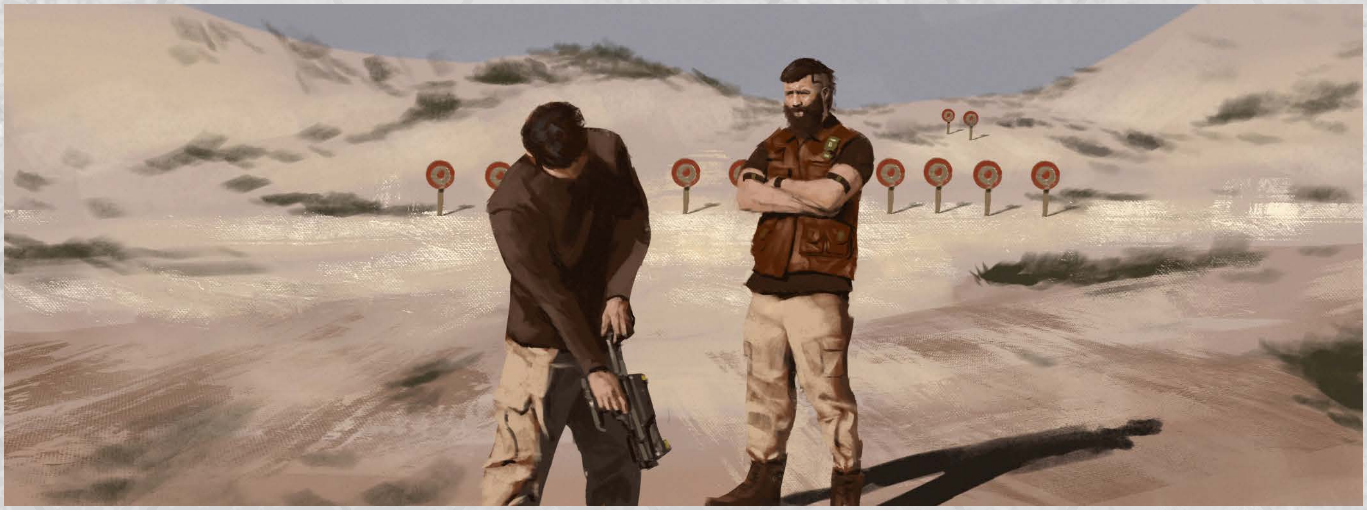
A targeted recruiting effort aims to get the best personnel available. It will produce a single candidate if successful. The recruiter must decide what DEI they are looking for and apply this as a negative DM on an Average (8+) Leadership or Admin check. Additional positive DMs can be obtained by spending large amounts of money on locating someone suitable or taking longer about the search. Each additional month allows DM+1, up to a maximum of +6. Every Cr25000 spent on searching for the right recruits also grants DM+1, up to a maximum of +4. This cost is in addition to a factor's standard finding fee if one is used.

General recruiting produces a lot more personnel, but they tend to be of low capability. The Traveller in charge of recruiting must roll on the Recruitment Results table, applying their Admin and Leadership skills – both can be used – or the factor's DM+2.

The result obtained on this table is a number of DEI levels obtained, which can be divided up as the Travellers please so long as the maximum DEI level is not exceeded. This will allow the Travellers to find lots of poor recruits or a few good ones. If the Travellers found 66 DEI levels, to a maximum DEI 8, they could assign this as eight good prospects with a DEI of 8 each and two no-hopers or they could find 22 poorly trained but enthusiastic beginners with a DEI of 3. The Travellers do not have to take all these recruits but must pay the finding-fee to the factor – if they use one – for each recruit they take on.

Recruitment Results

2D+DMs	Total DEI Levels Located	Max. Individual DEI
0–	0	0
1–2	1D	1
3–4	2D	3
5–6	4D	5
7–8	6D	7
9–10	8D	8
11–12	10D	9
13–14	12D	10
15+	16D	11



TRAINING

If the Travellers have the facilities or know someone who does, they can train their own raw recruits up from scratch. Varying levels of training can be provided, with ever-increasing costs. Each member of the unit assigned to provide training can train ten recruits per level of Leadership providing they have at least one assistant for every ten trainees. The assistants do not need Leadership but must have the basic skills of the unit being trained and be from a formation with a CEI equal to or higher than the people being trained. For example, an experienced sergeant with Leadership 3 could train 30 recruits but would need three assistants. These could be from the previous intake, and be only a little farther down the road than the current trainees, but they do need to be competent enough to spot mistakes and put them right.

Orientation: Orientation takes place whenever someone joins a new unit. It is an introduction to the force's practices and personalities, and ensures the new arrivals know who they are answerable to. For experienced personnel it can be a short barrage of information that instils no new skills. Mercenary units taking on completely untrained personnel, which often happens in cadre tickets, must teach them firearms safety and how to use basic equipment like their communicators. This process can be accomplished in one week, granting the batch of recruits DEI 2 if it was previously lower than that.

Basic, Minimal: Basic training normally takes many weeks and is delivered in a structured manner. A minimal version can be delivered in four weeks, creating personnel with some idea of how to conduct fire and manoeuvre and think like soldiers. Minimal training produces personnel with DEI 3.

Basic, Abbreviated: Abbreviated basic training covers the same ground as the minimal version but gives the recruits more time to absorb the lessons. It can be delivered in eight weeks and produces personnel with DEI 4.

Basic: A full basic training programme can be delivered in 16 weeks and produces personnel with a reasonable set of infantry skills plus some familiarity with equipment used by other specialisations. A graduate of a full programme of basic training will have DEI 5 and can be considered a Replacement rather than a recruit. These individuals can fit into a unit reasonably well but their inexperience will be very obvious.

Basic and Advanced: A full training programme takes 24 weeks and produces personnel with DEI 6. The latter part of training is spent on specialist skills, which for infantry are more of the same thing they have been doing all along. A full training programme for other specialists will produce artillery and vehicle crews, electronic warfare technicians and the like.

Ongoing

Once a sub-unit has completed training and is combat-ready it may gain a higher DEI level through experience or ongoing training. Training is normally delivered in four-week blocks and cannot be combined with other duties. Some on-the-job training will always be ongoing but this is about skill retention rather than improvement. Delivering a course of ongoing training is subject to the same limits as basic – one level of Leadership and one assistant per 10 trainees. Multiple trainers can be assigned to a subject group.

A trainer can increase the DEI of the subjects up to a level one lower than their own, or up to three times the level of the trainer in a relevant skill. For example, a trainer with Gun Combat 3 can train an infantry unit up to DEI 9. A course increases the DEI of the subject group by +1 if an Easy (4+) Leadership check is made by the most skilled of the trainers. This check is subject to a negative DM equal to the current DEI of the trainees. Thus a trainer from a unit with CEI 9 can train others up to DEI 8. If the subject group is just out of a basic and advanced training programme their DEI 6 is applied as a negative DM on this check. A trainer with a Leadership 2 would need 4+ on 2D with a total DM-4. If the check is failed the subjects to not gain DEI but can repeat the course later.

If training is outsourced, the cost is equal to a month's salaries for everyone involved, in addition to their actual pay. In-house training provided by the Travellers themselves costs the same amount of supplies as if the sub-units involved were on combat operations.

Determining Initial CEI

The initial CEI of a unit is based on the training level of its sub-units or the unit as a whole. When creating a new unit it is simplest to consider the entire force as a detachment of recruits and provide training to the requisite level. The DEI of the recruits is now the CEI of the unit as a whole. It is possible to create a skeleton unit in this manner and expand the sub-units later, although this might affect the CEI of the sub-units.

If the force is being put together gradually or is built up of amalgamated smaller units, its overall CEI is determined by the average of its top-level sub-units. If the Travellers really like detail they can determine the DEI of every section in a platoon, which gives the DEI of the platoon. Working out the DEI of all platoons in a company and averaging them gives the DEI of the company, which can be averaged with the DEI of the other companies to indicate the CEI of the parent battalion. This is a lot of work, however, and it is generally desirable to simply rate the top-level sub-units.

Example

The Travellers are raising a company-sized force that will consist of four platoons. They could raise the unit and its sub-units as a single item, provide whatever level of training they can afford and assign the unit's CEI based on this. However, the Travellers have all brought different assets to the table and want to rate their own platoons. For purposes of determining overall CEI, each platoon is given equal weight; the Referee should stomp on attempts to exploit this by creating a four soldier platoon skeleton and training it to a hair in order to artificially pull the overall unit's CEI up.

One Traveller has enough resources to field a platoon of armoured cars and provides basic and advanced training, worth DEI 5. Another has a platoon of infantry, almost up to strength, which has been trained to an equivalent level and has a little field experience, granting DEI 7. A third Traveller has over-enthusiastically recruited a mob of noobs who have received only a patchy orientation and have DEI 2. The fourth 'platoon' is actually a single artillery piece and crew, with a few additional personnel as technicians and security. This proto-platoon has DEI 9 due to its professional experience and is considered to have equal weight to the others when determining the unit's CEI.

After a few days of simple exercises to form a cohesive unit, the Travellers begin to see how the force is shaping up. There are four sub-units, with a total DEI of 5+7+2+9=23. Dividing by 4 this gives 5.75, which the Referee rounds up to 6. The new force would benefit from some training but can function efficiently enough providing tasks are kept simple. Detaching the second infantry platoon would be a bad idea, however, since it relies heavily on support from the more experienced sub-units.

Once CEI is established, the Referee may decide that all sub-units now have the overall CEI of the force. This represents some swapping around of personnel, shared experience and the creation of a more cohesive force. For simplicity, if the force as a whole receives a training package between tickets, this homogenisation of the CEI can be assumed to have occurred.

If the Travellers prefer to rate their sub-units separately they may do so. Training one of the sub-units up may require overall CEI to be modified. An increase in overall unit CEI in this case equates to an equal increase in the DEI of each sub-unit.

Once CEI is determined for a new unit, its Reputation can now be established. This is normally equal to CEI-1D but in the case of a unit run by Travellers they can try to improve it. The commander of the unit or a designated representative may make an Average (8+) Leadership check with their final rank as an additional DM. The unit's starting reputation is equal to its CEI plus the Effect of this check, minus 1D.

SALARIES

Mercenary forces can pay their troops whatever they think they can get away with but obviously a force that grossly underpays people for risking their lives will have trouble filling its ranks. The Travellers may find that salaries make up a large proportion of their operating budget and will need to pay the troops monthly or face a rapid drop in morale. Interstellar law varies from place-to-place but it is generally understood that a force in the field may have difficulty getting money to the troops and that a brief disruption is not a breach of contract. However, there are guidelines governing the payment of mercenary forces, which allow personnel to decline active duty or even leave the unit without penalty if their pay is in arrears.

Failure to get pay fully up to date at the end of a ticket is considered a breach of contract on the part of the unit and personnel are automatically freed from their contracts to the force. In some cases a cash-strapped unit will negotiate with its members, typically on the basis that 'one more ticket' will resolve the situation. This sometimes leads to a commander, heavily in debt to their own people, taking on a job they would not normally even consider. Each month's pay arrears imposes a one point reduction in MOR along with DM-1 on all attempts to recruit or train personnel.

The levels given in the Guideline Salaries table are suggestions only. A unit paying less suffers DM-1 to all attempts to recruit personnel for every 10% or part thereof its salaries that are below the standard. Paying more allows DM+1 for up to 25% extra and DM+2 for up to 50% extra. A force offering more than 150% of standard salaries gets no additional bonus since potential members are likely to wonder why the commanders are so desperate to get people into the unit.

Salaries must be paid whatever the unit is doing, even when waiting for a ticket to come along. Personnel are due a 25% increment for the 'active' part of the ticket. Exactly how personnel qualify for this 'combat pay' is up to the force operator but it is usual to grant the extra pay in blocks of several days, for any occasions where contact with hostiles is likely even if it does not occur.

Some force operators try to get around the salary problem by dismissing most of their personnel at the end of a ticket and recruiting more when it is time to deploy again. Hire-and-fire techniques like this tend to alienate personnel and certainly do not allow a sense of unity to develop. If the Travellers choose to go down this route they will suffer at least DM-1 to recruit personnel and morale may also be decreased.

Salaries are typically much the same for people in the same role, even if different terms are used for their rank. Guideline salaries do not include combat pay or bonuses.

Guideline Salaries

Role	Monthly Pay
Infantry Soldier (Private)	Cr1000
Squad Leader (Corporal)	Cr1200
Expert Soldier (Technician-Corporal)	Cr1300
Section Leader (Lance-Sergeant)	Cr1500
Platoon NCO (Sergeant)	Cr2000
Company NCO (Staff Sergeant)	Cr2500
Junior Platoon-Level Officer (Second-Lieutenant)	Cr2500
Senior Platoon-Level Officer (Lieutenant)	Cr3000
Battalion NCO (Sergeant-Major)	Cr3500
Junior Company-Level Officer (Captain)	Cr4000
Senior Company-Level Officer (Major)	Cr5000
Junior Battalion-Level Officer (Major)	Cr6000
Senior Battalion-Level Officer (Lieutenant-Colonel)	Cr8000
Brigade Level Officer (Colonel/ Brigadier)	Cr10000

It is common to offer bonuses to skilled personnel. Typically a skill level of 2 or better is required to be considered 'skilled' and a bonus of 10% is payable for every skill level the soldier has in their specialist area. Units may also award higher pay to those with essential skills and may run a bonus system. This can be configured in various ways but typically the senior officers and key personnel receive a number of 'bonus shares' and some are awarded among the unit's members after each ticket. A proportion of the unit's fee is divided among those qualifying for bonuses at the end of the ticket.

The Travellers may wish to calculate the exact salary requirements for their unit or may use the Standard Salaries table for a typical force. These figures do not include combat pay but assume a competent force with some personnel qualifying for skills bonuses. Artillery and vehicle units have a lower salary requirement but maintenance costs must be paid on equipment.

Standard Salaries

Force	Monthly Salary Total
Single Artillery or Vehicle Crew	Cr6000
Infantry Section	Cr9000
Specialist Section	Cr12000
Infantry Platoon	Cr40000
Artillery Battery or Vehicle Platoon	Cr28000
Infantry Company	Cr200000
Artillery or Vehicle Company	Cr150000
Composite or Combined-Arms Company	Cr175000
Infantry Battalion	MCr1
Artillery or Vehicle Battalion	Cr600000
Combined-Arms Battalion	Cr800000

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of individual equipment is assumed to be part of the unit's supply requirements. Artillery weapons, vehicles and similar heavy equipment require Materiel to maintain them. This can be bought, requisitioned from a client or scavenged; it must be obtained somehow but the means do not really matter to the maintenance team.

The maintenance cost of heavy equipment is based on its shipping tonnage, modified by the propulsion system in use. Tracked vehicles cost more than wheeled ones to maintain and grav vehicles cost even more. Similarly, the maintenance requirement for artillery weapons is based on their own tonnage if on an independent mount such as a trailer. If the weapon is carried in a vehicle, the vehicle's tonnage is what matters.

Maintenance Requirements

Factor	Effect
Static or Towed Mount	x1
Wheeled Vehicle	x2
Watercraft	x2.5
Tracked Vehicle	x5
Aircraft	x8
Grav Vehicle	x10

Base maintenance requirement for heavy equipment is 5% of the vehicle or piece of equipment's shipping tonnage, per month. This is modified by the item's propulsion type. For example, TL7 support mortar on an unpowered mount has a shipping tonnage of 0.25, so a battery of four of them equals one ton of heavy equipment. Since the weapons are not aboard a self-propelled vehicle, the battery costs 0.05 Materiel per month to maintain. On the other hand, a 15-ton g-carrier requires 0.75 Materiel, multiplied by 10 to 7.5 because grav vehicles require a lot more effort to keep flying.

CHAPTER-THREE

EQUIPPING THE UNIT

A military unit of any sort requires a great deal of mundane items like messkits, rain ponchos and stylish berets. This equipment is abstracted as Materiel required to set up the formation. The Travellers are assumed to be obtaining replacements for this equipment as part of their supply budget for a force and do not need to keep track of it. They will, however, need to buy and maintain weaponry and vehicles. Larger items are often bought singly but mercenary units tend to buy small arms and the like in discounted high-volume shipments.

Supplies and Materiel can also be bought, again in discounted packages. Outfitters typically have ready-to-go standard packages containing a full set of equipment for one soldier, or 10, or 50, with add-on packs for those who want the more expensive extras. The availability of these packages, which reduce costs by standardisation, mean that smaller mercenary units often have a very similar look to one another. Larger units typically request packages to their own specification and may vary more in appearance.

Materiel is typically bought in shipments of 10, 100 or 1,000 units. This represents uniforms, common electronic spares, vehicle components and all other non-combat requirements. It is not specified when the Travellers buy it and can be left as a resource pool until they need it.

Supplies are also bought in shipments of 10, 100, or 1,000 units. It represents food, ammunition, fuel, lubricants and similar expendable resources. Supplies are not specified when the Travellers buy them – there is no need to define that the shipment contains X rations and Y rounds of ammunition – and can be left as a resource pool for when the Travellers draw upon it.

The Supplies and Material table indicates the typical cash cost of a shipment, which includes a bulk discount and the tonnage required to store or ship it. Tonnage is in terms of starship displacement. Packaging becomes greatly more efficient in larger quantities for supplies but to a lesser extent for Materiel.

Supplies and Materiel

Item	Cost	Tonnage
Supplies (1)	Cr100	0.05
Supplies (10)	Cr900	0.2
Supplies (100)	Cr80000	1
Supplies (1,000)	Cr75000	5
Materiel (1)	Cr10000	0.1
Materiel (10)	Cr90000	1
Materiel (100)	Cr750000	10
Materiel (1,000)	Cr6000000	75

WORKING WITH AN ARMS DEALER

The process of establishing a relationship with an arms dealer is sometimes very simple. Most are legitimate businesspeople, although some will bend the rules when it suits them. An apparently legitimate dealer must keep up appearances, which means requiring a unit to have licenses and present credentials. Some have a minimum level of Reputation and will not deal with a unit that does not meet its standards. Others grant more leeway and can be persuaded (using Persuade and Unit Influence) to establish a relationship with a mercenary unit. There is usually a fee associated, which typically ranges from Cr25000 to Cr100000. A few dealers – legitimate and otherwise – demand a million or more Credits just to establish a relationship.

Once a relationship is established, the dealer will sell whatever they have at a negotiated price. The Referee will need to decide exactly what the dealer can get and in what sort of quantities. Special requests can be attempted, although at a higher than usual price. For example, Legitimate Arms Incorporated is willing to deal with slightly dubious mercenary units but requires Reputation 5+. It will discontinue dealings until a unit repairs its professional reputation. If these conditions are met, LAI can obtain infantry and artillery weapons up to TL10 and aerospace defence equipment up to TL12. It rarely deals in combat vehicles such as tanks but can easily get converted grav trucks to mount weaponry on. If the Travellers want these items they can just order them once a relationship has been established. If they want a shipment of grav tanks, LAI can try to get them but there are no guarantees and the cost will be inflated.

The willingness of dealers to work with the Travellers can be a major plot point in a campaign, with the mercenaries working hard to get on the client list for a full-service, high-tech provider whilst having to make do with TL9 equipment obtained by a mostly-legal broker. Some of this equipment might have a history or might not be available after all, causing the Travellers to revise their plans or deal with the fallout of their attempts to buy stolen missile launchers.

If the Referee does not wish to create multiple sources of arms and equipment and allow the Travellers free rein in developing relationships, they should instead define the Travellers' starting source of weaponry and materiel, and provide one or more potential sources of higher TL equipment. Creating a relationship with these can be a campaign goal, allowing the Travellers to improve the sophistication of their equipment. If this is to be abstracted, a system based upon Influence and Reputation is used.

Creating Dealers and Sources

A potential source of Materiel and equipment can be generated randomly or values can be assigned by the Referee. If random determination is preferred, roll 2D on each column of the Arms Dealers table. The unit's Reputation provides a blanket DM across all columns. Influence can be applied as a DM on any one column of the Travellers' choice. If it is negative, it must still be applied but the Travellers can choose which column.

Most dealers will have one or more categories of equipment available – infantry weapons, artillery, aerospace, combat vehicles and support or specialist systems such as electronic warfare equipment and advanced sensors. A dealer who has none of these can supply only minimal equipment – mismatched small arms, crudely converted civilian vehicles, Supplies and Materiel.

Equipment is categorised as None, Basic and Quality. None is self-explanatory – the dealer does not work in that sector. Basic and Quality equipment categories are discussed under Combat Assets on the following page.

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Arms Dealers

2D+DMs	Max. TL	Infantry	Artillery	Combat Vehicles	Aerospace	Support and Specialist
0 or less	6	None	None	None	None	None
1	7	None	None	None	None	None
2–3	8	Basic	None	None	None	None
4–5	9	Basic	None	Basic	None	None
6–7	10	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic
8–9	11	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic
10–11	12	Quality	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic
12–13	13	Quality	Quality	Basic	Basic	Quality
14–15	14	Quality	Quality	Quality	Quality	Quality
16 or more	15	Quality	Quality	Quality	Quality	Quality

Example

The Free Grenadiers are seeking a new supplier for weaponry. They give the job to one of their officers between tickets. The unit has Reputation 2 and a rather weak Influence –1. The former applies on all columns whilst the latter has to be applied on a column of the Travellers' choice. Rolling for Tech Level, the dice come up a 7, modified to 9. A dealer has been found who can supply up to TL11 equipment. The unit rolls an 8 for infantry weapons, modified to 10 – Quality weaponry is available. Since artillery is a low priority the Influence DM is applied there, resulting in a net 5 – no artillery weapons are available from this dealer. Further rolls determine that Basic combat vehicles are available, Quality aerospace weapons and Quality support and specialist systems. This is a good result, enabling the unit to get hold of some of the best equipment available at TL 11.

The Referee should note that this system is for random determination of dealers and it is always possible to dictate the capabilities of any given dealer. Someone who can supply only the most minimal small arms and hardware but Quality armoured vehicles up to TL15, is entirely a possibility. However, the top-end dealers will have restrictions on who they will work with or may impose conditions that lead to new adventures.

COMBAT ASSETS

Rather than purchase a gun, grenades, sighting aids and spare magazines for every single soldier in the unit, mercenary formations will usually order shipments of equipment from an outfitter. Individual personnel might have their own weapons, particularly in the case of specialists and experts, but most members of a unit will draw their weapons from the unit's armoury. The Travellers are welcome to specify exactly what weaponry each individual is carrying but it is sufficient to state the TL and equipment level of a force and assume that soldiers are outfitted suitably for the task at hand.

The Tech Level of a force – and therefore its TL DM – is determined by its general equipment and the weaponry issued in connection with the unit's primary function. Thus an artillery formation is distinguished by the TL of its howitzers, rocket batteries or other bombardment systems rather than the small arms carried by its security element. The Travellers should not be permitted to exploit this, however. The Referee is free to disregard support equipment provided in too small a quantity or to assign an averaged TL to a unit that is deliberately exploiting the Tech Level assessment guidelines.

General equipment is a factor in determining the TL of a force and is provided as Materiel when the unit and its sub-units are raised. The TL assigned to the unit is the TL of the Materiel used. If this is sourced locally, for example by scavenging a battlefield on a TL7 world to equip a newly raised reinforcement platoon, the local TL is used. If Materiel can be bought in from a supplier it can be of any TL. These rules are about running a mercenary

Basic Equipment and Body Armour

The basic equipment provided to a mercenary force includes personal protection as appropriate to the role of the individual. This is factored into the combat calculations and need not be tracked separately. Personal protection in this case includes flak jackets, helmets, limb plates and similar equipment but not combat armour or battle dress. Full-suit armour is detailed in the Specialists book.

campaign rather than determining exactly what supplies and equipment are available in any given location, so it is up to the Referee to say what is available. In any given setting there will be a few full-service sources of military equipment and if the Travellers have a good relationship with one they can buy equipment there. If not, they will have to find a supplier.

This is a part of running a mercenary unit that most outsiders never consider but a commander needs to create and maintain relationships with anyone who can supply arms and ammunition. There are adventures to be had in doing so; perhaps a prospective client will be able to provide equipment in return for a task. The Travellers will at the very least need to get in touch with prospective suppliers and see what is available.

Combat Assets are bought as blocks of equipment, rated as Basic or Quality, and in quantities that determine the equipping level of the unit. Quality equipment is required to achieve an equipping level of Generous or above and imposes an additional DM+1 on checks to resolve combat using it and DM+2 where the quality of a unit's equipment may be a factor outside combat. For example, if a unit has Quality artillery systems and is caught in a fierce sandstorm that might disrupt the function of its weapons, it receives DM+2 on checks to see if the guns can still function.

The amount and quality of equipment purchased for a formation determines its equipping level, rated from Minimal to Excessive as noted on page 60 in *Book 1*. A force will typically only equip itself to one level lower than its primary area of expertise in other areas. An artillery formation with Standard weapons would normally be restricted to Basic infantry weapons. However, the Travellers are free to equip their force how they like so long as they are prepared to pay the costs.

COMBAT ASSETS: INFANTRY

Infantry combat assets are required for any unit to be able to function as a ground combat force. A force's Combat characteristic is based on the Tech Level of its primary small arms and support weapons. A force that has no infantry combat equipment has Combat 0. If some form of equipment has been provided, Combat starts at of the unit's Tech Level, rounded down, unless it is an infantry type unit whose primary purpose is to engage the enemy. In this case, Combat starts at 1/2the unit's Tech Level, rounded down.

Costs to equip a unit assumes a discount for buying in quantity. Weapons can usually be scavenged or bought more cheaply on the surplus market but are unlikely to be of high quality. If a force larger than a company is being equipped all at once, multiple companies' worth of equipment can be bought at a 5% discount per additional company, down to a minimum of 60% of the standard price. Note that these prices are to equip an infantry formation. Armoured, Artillery, Aerospace and Support formations need less equipment and thus may halve the cost.

Small Arms, Minimal: Minimal small arms represents civilian type weapons or a mismatched collection of scavenged guns with few or no automatic weapons and no support weapons. Minimal small arms increases Combat to 1 if it is currently 0 but otherwise has no effect.

Small Arms, Sparse: A Sparse level of equipment is equivalent to what is typically available to the average security or law enforcement patrol. It may include a small amount of obsolescent or mismatched military weapons but no support weapons. Sparse small arms increase a unit's Combat by +1.

Small Arms, Basic: Basic small arms are the minimum for effective infantry formations. Most soldiers will have a rifle or equivalent weapon, with grenades and a minimum of support weapons. Basic weaponry is typical of what is issued to non-infantry formations for self-defence. In this case it includes carbine versions of the standard rifle, fully-automatic but low-capacity personal defence weapons and the like. Basic small arms increase the unit's Combat by +2.

Small Arms, Standard: Standard small arms are what the typical military force might carry. Most personnel have a rifle or equivalent weapon, with a reasonable level of support weapons throughout the force. This typically includes squad-level light automatic weapons such as machineguns or support versions of the standard rifle, grenade launchers and some personnel equipped with 'marksman' rifles. Standard small arms provides a minimal capability against light armoured vehicles, in the form of rifle or launcher grenades, disposable rockets or rocket propelled grenades and so forth. Standard weaponry increases the Combat by +3.

Small Arms, Generous: A generous or better allocation of small arms requires Quality weaponry. Personnel are equipped much as in a Standard loadout but their gear is sufficiently better to give an advantage. This might be in supporting areas like personal sensors and sights rather than better weaponry but also includes improved grenades and rockets, additional tactical systems such as stun grenades and advanced ammunition that makes typical small arms more effective. Generous small arms increases Combat by +4.

Small Arms, Lavish: A unit with Lavish small arms typically allows personnel to choose variants of a standard set of weapons, tailored to their own specifications, along with the very best sights, sensors and ammunition available. Capabilities are not much wider than with Standard weaponry – the unit will have limited self-support capability with launched grenades, rockets and powerful anti-materiel weapons but ultimately can engage only the same targets as a force with Standard equipment. However, it can do so more effectively and lighter equipment means more ammunition or backup weapons can be carried. Lavish small arms increases Combat by +5.

Small Arms, Excessive: Excessive small arms can be in terms of quality, quantity or both. Weapons are the very best versions available, lovingly maintained and possibly custom-handmade to the specifications of each soldier. Shaving a few grams off every piece of equipment means a force can carry yet more ammunition or additional grenades, support or specialist weapons. The net result is to increase Combat by +6.

Infantry Combat Assets Costs

Infantry Combat Asset	Cost per Section	Cost per Platoon	Cost per Company
Minimal	Cr2500	Cr10000	Cr35000
Sparse	Cr5000	Cr17500	Cr60000
Basic	Cr7500	Cr27500	Cr100000
Standard	Cr10000	Cr35000	Cr125000
Generous	Cr20000	Cr75000	Cr250000
Lavish	Cr50000	Cr175000	Cr650000
Excessive	Cr100000	Cr350000	MCr1.25

Tech Level Modifiers for Hardware

Normally a unit will be equipped at its nominal TL in all areas, though it is possible for TL in some areas to differ – for example if the unit has retained its TL13 grav tanks during a retreat but had to re-equip with locally made TL7 small arms. The costs given for equipment assume the force is being equipped at TL9. If higher or lower TL equipment is desired (and is available) apply the following cost multipliers:

TL	Cost Multiplier
1	x0.2
2	x0.3
3	x0.4
4	x0.5
5	x0.6
6	x0.7
7	x0.8
8	x0.9
9	x1
10	x1.25
11	x1.5
12	x2
13	x3
14	x4
15	x5

COMBAT ASSETS: VEHICLES

A force does not need any vehicles in order to be able to fight. Its equipping level indicates the type, number and effectiveness of any vehicle-mounted combat systems the formation has. That is to say, the amount of vehicles a formation has defines its Mobility but the type and firepower or its vehicle-mounted weapons is what defines its Combat characteristic. This is only the case if the vehicles are intended for combat. Those that are purely transports do not affect Combat but define Mobility. If the vehicles are intended to fight using their onboard weapons, their Combat is based on 1/2 their Tech Level. If the weapons are intended for defensive or fire-support purposes, Combat is rated as 1/3 of Tech Level. If the unit is primarily an infantry-type force with some fire support either on its transports or aboard dedicated combat vehicles, the unit's infantry weapons are used to define its Combat characteristic, with a bonus from vehicular weapons.

The cost of vehicles is not abstracted in the same way that infantry weapons are. The Travellers must obtain whatever vehicles they can afford or otherwise get hold of, at which point the Referee will rate the equipping level from Minimal to Excessive. If a force is intended to fight using the weapons on its vehicles, its Combat characteristic is based on that of the vehicle-mounted weapons rather than infantry weaponry carried by the crews. However, personnel will expect to be issued small arms for self-defence.

If a unit is intended for direct combat using vehicle-mounted weapons, such as a tank or armoured car formation, its starting Combat characteristic is 1/2 its Tech Level. Transport formations start with a Combat characteristic of 1/3 Tech Level if they have any vehicle-mounted weaponry and zero if not.

Note that an infantry-type unit can only benefit from the most potent fire support weapon it has. Only the highest bonus to Combat is considered.

Vehicle Weapons, Minimal: Minimal vehicle weapons represent the lightest of infantry support weapons, typically on an unprotected pintle mount. Minimal equipment allows the formation's Combat characteristic to be rated at 1/3 of Tech Level rather than 0 but otherwise has no effect. A military unit riding in vehicles will be better off using its own small arms and thus its own Combat characteristic, so the only time this is likely to matter is when the vehicles have no passengers.

Vehicle Weapons, Sparse: A Sparse level of equipment indicates infantry support weapons, up to the level of a heavy machinegun on a ring mount, are present on the vehicles. Typically a force riding such lightly armed vehicles will use its own weapons. Sparse weaponry is unlikely to be encountered aboard combat vehicles such as tanks, other than at low Tech Levels. Sparse weaponry allows a formation's Combat characteristic to be rated at 1/3 its Tech Level and adds +1 either to this rating or as an additional bonus to the Combat of infantry riding Sparsely armed transport vehicles.

Vehicle Weapons, Basic: Basic vehicle weaponry is typically found as a defensive armament aboard artillery platforms or transport assets. It includes light autocannon or light laser weapons intended for anti-personnel work or perhaps engaging lightly armoured vehicles. Basic vehicle weapons allow a formation's Combat characteristic to be rated at 1/3 its Tech Level and add +2 to this, or add an additional +2 to the Combat of a formation which includes these weapons as fire support.

Vehicle Weapons, Standard: Standard-level weaponry is encountered aboard light tanks and reconnaissance vehicles, and mounted on transport vehicles that are intended to offer some direct-fire support. In the latter case, Combat characteristic is based on 1/3 of the unit's Tech Level, with an additional +3, or the unit's vehicle-mounted weaponry adds +3 to the Combat of an infantry-type force using the vehicles as transport. A unit that uses its vehicle weapons as a primary combat capability bases its Combat characteristic on 1/2 its Tech Level and adds +4 to this for its Standard level weapons. These are typically heavy autocannon, lasers, rifled or smoothbore cannon up to around 90mm calibre or vehicle-mounted laser systems.

Vehicle Weaponry, Generous: A generous or better allocation of vehicle weaponry requires Quality weaponry. This level of equipment is sometimes found aboard fire-support vehicles – in which case it adds +4 to the Combat of the infantry force it supports or as the main weapon of a grav sled, tank or armoured reconnaissance vehicle. In the latter case Combat is based on 1/2the unit's Tech Level,+6 for the Generous weaponry. Examples include conventional cannon of up to 150mm, hypervelocity guns, missile systems, early plasma weapons and heavy laser cannon.

Vehicle Weaponry, Lavish: Lavish vehicle weaponry includes early fusion guns, heavy plasma guns and the very best of conventional cannon or missile systems. A fire support vehicle with this level of capability adds +5 to the Combat of an infantry formation it supports; if mounted on a tank or grav gunship Combat is based on 1/2the unit's Tech Level, +8 for the lavish weaponry.

Vehicle Weaponry, Excessive: Excessive weaponry indicates the top end of the plasma and fusion gun fields plus exotic weapons such as vehicle-mounted disintegrators. A fire support vehicle with this level of capability adds +6 to the Combat of an infantry formation it supports; if mounted on a tank or grav gunship Combat is based on 1/2 the unit's Tech Level, +10 for the weaponry.

Vehicle Weapons

Weaponry Level	Combat: Transport Vehicles	Combat: Fire-support Vehicle	Combat: Direct-combat Vehicle
Minimal	1/3 TL	0	1/3 TL
Sparse	1/3 TL+1	+1	1/3 TL+1
Basic	1/3 TL+2	+2	1/3 TL+2
Standard	1/3 TL+3	+3	1/2TL4
Generous	1/3 TL+4	+4	1/2TL+6
Lavish	1/3 TL+5	+5	1/2TL+8
Excessive	1/3 TL+6	+6	1/2TL+10

Example

The Travellers have an infantry platoon with Combat 8. They are in a position to obtain some TL8 wheeled armoured personnel carriers mounting 25mm autocannon – Basic level vehicular weaponry. If these were formed into a unit on their own they would have a Combat characteristic of 1/3 their Tech Level (2.67, rounded to 3) +2 for their Basic weaponry. If these had been armoured cars of the same Tech Level their Combat would be 4 (half of their TL 8) +2, making 6, but APCs are not tough enough to be considered direct-combat vehicles.

This is not an effective armoured unit, so the Travellers team the vehicles up with their infantry platoon. The Combat of this unit is increased by +2 for the fire support available from their vehicles' 25mm autocannon and the platoon is now greatly increased in mobility. A wheeled-mobile infantry platoon with a Combat 10 seems more useful than the two units separately.

Next, the Travellers buy a TL10 light grav tank mounting a plasma gun. If this was formed as a unit on its own it would have a Combat of half its TL (10, halved to 5) +6 for the Generous weaponry it carries. Combat 11 seems impressive but it is a lone tank. The Travellers integrate it into their existing platoon instead. Mobility of this unit is not increased; it can only go as fast as its wheeled APCs can manage. However, the addition of a plasma gun adds +4 to the unit's Combat.

The force is still based around its infantry component but is now wheeled-mobile with a tank-mounted plasma gun and some 25mm autocannon in support. The Travellers think the plasma gun will bring their unit's Combat up to 14 but they have forgotten that their force can only benefit from the most potent support weapon it contains. The +2 from the APC-mounted autocannon is disregarded but the +4 from the Generous plasma cannon still gives Combat 12. The Travellers consider detaching the APCs but then they would have an infantry formation teamed up with a grav tank, leaving the unit unable to benefit from its mobility. Such are the choices made by mercenary commanders.

COMBAT ASSETS: ARTILLERY

Artillery weapons are those capable of indirect fire or bombarding a distant target from beyond the range of small arms. This means that primitive black powder cannon would be considered Combat assets rather than Artillery in this context. Even something as basic as a grenade launcher can outrange black powder guns, allowing a mercenary force to destroy them from a safe distance.

Like vehicles, the cost of artillery systems is not abstracted. The Travellers can buy any weaponry they can get their hands on and the Referee must rate its effectiveness according to the type, nature and quality of the equipment fielded. Artillery affects the Bombardment characteristic, which starts at 0 if no artillery weapons are provided to the unit. Assuming a force has at least some artillery weapons its Bombardment begins at 1/2the unit's Tech Level.

Artillery weapons can be man-portable if they are very small but are usually carried either on an unpowered carriage or in a vehicle. The former is typically referred to as 'towed' artillery, whilst those in vehicles are 'mobile'. However, some very large pieces mounted aboard slow-moving vehicles are not really 'mobile' and might better be characterised as 'siege' weapons. The vehicles used to carry artillery weapons can usually mount some light direct-fire systems, which will give them an increased Combat characteristic. If not, the Combat of an artillery unit is based on the small arms carried by its crews and any security element that may be present. The vehicles themselves affect Mobility but do not change Bombardment or Combat.

Note that if an artillery weapon is included in an infantry force as a fire support element it can provide an increase to Combat and Bombardment but Bombardment begins at 0 in this case – an infantry battalion with a self-propelled gun is still an infantry force. Only units where the primary function of the formation is bombardment base their Bombardment characteristic on 1/2Tech Level.

Artillery, Minimal: Minimal artillery includes support versions of soldier-portable weapons, such as belt-fed automatic grenade launchers or even just large numbers of personal grenade launchers. An infantry unit where everyone has a launcher and several grenades for it – which constitutes a heavy personal load – could be considered to have Minimal artillery. At higher Tech Levels, one-use seeker drones grant a similar capability. Minimal Artillery grants the formation a flat Bombardment 1.

Artillery, Sparse: Sparse artillery is the minimum for a force to be considered 'artillery' rather than 'combat'. Examples include light man-portable mortars and similar weapons, and man-portable guided missile systems. If a non-artillery force is given Sparse artillery its Bombardment is set to 2. A force primarily equipped in this manner and deployed as artillery bases its Bombardment on 1/2Tech Level, +1 for its Sparse artillery.

Artillery, Basic: Basic artillery is typically medium to heavy mortars, light artillery guns or howitzers, or light unguided rockets. Light guided missiles can also be used as bunker-busters in this role. Basic and heavier artillery is not man-portable and needs a towed carriage or vehicle mount, or a static emplacement. A 'straight' artillery unit equipped in this manner bases its Bombardment on 1/2Tech Level, +2 for Basic artillery. A multi-role formation, such as one equipped with a mix of tanks and self-propelled artillery, bases its Bombardment on 1/3 Tech Level, +2 for Basic artillery.

Artillery, Standard: Standard artillery is typically made up of medium-calibre guns or howitzers in the 150–220mm range or heavy guided or unguided rockets. Some alternate systems use swarms of drones instead, although this is less cost-effective than tube or rocket artillery. Standard artillery is the most potent level likely to be found in composite units. Artillery formations equipped in this way gain +4 to Bombardment.

Artillery, Generous: A generous or better allocation of artillery requires Quality weaponry. Sometimes weapons are the same as at the Standard level, just more of them and with a few refinements. The dividing line between Standard and Generous artillery is often in terms of ammunition; Generous artillery can shoot further from the same type of gun, hit more accurately and do more damage. Some specialist munitions may be available, such as autonomous self-guided top-attack missiles for use against tanks or field artillery scattered mines. Generously equipped artillery formations gain +6 to Bombardment.

Artillery, Lavish: Lavish artillery features advanced targeting and guidance, improved warheads and considerable refinement to ensure the target is saturated or penetrated. Specialist warheads are likely to be available, such as Agent Defeat Munitions designed to take out stockpiles of biological or chemical weapons, deep penetration rounds for cracking bunkers and infrastructure-denial systems to short out power supplies. The weapons themselves are typically not all that different from more basic systems but the package as a whole is vastly more effective. Lavish artillery grants +8 to Bombardment.

Artillery, Excessive: Excessive artillery tends to be crammed with bells and whistles whether it is of a conventional type or something more exotic. At higher Tech Levels, battlefield meson guns provide a different kind of indirect fire, effectively shooting through terrain rather than lobbing something over it. Excessive artillery grants +10 to Bombardment.

Artillery

Weaponry Level	Bombardment if added to Infantry Formation	Bombardment in Composite Formation	Bombardment for Artillery Formation
Minimal	1	1	N/A
Sparse	2	2	1/2TL+1
Basic	N/A	1/3 TL+2	1/2TL+2
Standard	N/A	1/3 TL+4	1/2TL+4
Generous	N/A	N/A	1/2TL+6
Lavish	N/A	N/A	1/2TL+8
Excessive	N/A	N/A	1/2TL+10

Example

The Angry Gun Rowdies is a rather amateurish formation that has come into possession of a TL8 125mm gun-howitzer on a wheeled chassis. After trying it out on the local scenery, the Rowdies decide to form an artillery component for their force. Their first idea is to create a composite platoon of infantry and the artillery piece. One weapon is a rather low allocation for an artillery platoon-equivalent but the Referee thinks this is acceptable for a composite force. The unit's Combat is based on its infantry component and the Referee allows the formation to be considered a platoon-sized composite unit with Basic artillery. The Rowdies are even granted +2 to their Combat as they have a 125mm weapon providing fire support. Bombardment is a disappointing 5.

The Rowdies were hoping to blow up more stuff than that, so redefine their gun as a pure artillery unit. Instead of a platoon, this is now a single major combat vehicle, thus the equivalent of a section. One gun on the section scale is enough for consideration as an artillery unit, so the new independent artillery section is rated as having Standard artillery. This means its Bombardment is half its TL of 8, +4 – a more respectable 8. The Rowdies are pleased but if this single-gun battery engages a platoon-sized unit it suffers the usual DM-4 for a difference of one level in unit scale. This increases to DM-8 if taking on an enemy company. The Rowdies will just have to learn that there is a limit to what can be achieved with small amounts of artillery.

COMBAT ASSETS: AEROSPACE DEFENCE

Whilst the most primitive flying machines can be chewed out of the sky with assault rifles as they trundle slowly past, serious combat assets – whether they are aircraft, grav vehicles or even flying creatures – require specialist weaponry to deal with them. Where a ground force is attacked from the air from short range – such as by a local biplane with a couple of machineguns strapped on it – the force may use its Combat characteristic to fight back. More significant threats require aerospace defence weaponry, and it is considered must-have equipment by most mercenary forces.

Aerospace weaponry can be given to any formation. Those that are not dedicated aerospace or anti-aerospace forces base their Aerospace off 1/3 of their Tech Level – providing they have enough weaponry to be effective – whist specialist units use 1/2their Tech Level as the base for their characteristic.

The Travellers can of course choose not to obtain aerospace defence equipment. If they do buy some, defensive weaponry of a sort that can be carried by personnel or mounted on a non-specialist vehicle can be rated up to Standard level. A greater anti-aerospace capability requires more significant weapon systems, which are only found in specialist formations. The same ratings are used for a unit's self-defence capability, long-range area defence capability or the weaponry of an aerospace vehicle such as a fighter or interceptor.

Aerospace Weapons, Minimal: Minimal weaponry typically represents conversions of standard light support systems, such as machineguns on a high-angle mount. A Minimal equipment level permits the force to assign a value of 1 to its Aerospace characteristic, indicating a very minor ability to harm flying vehicles beyond the range of hand-held small arms.

Aerospace Weapons, Sparse: A Sparse level of equipment typically indicates the unit has some effective anti-aerospace weapons but very few of them. Weapons are generally light autocannon or lasers on a high-angle mount and low-quality shoulder-fired missiles. A Sparse allocation of aerospace weaponry allows the unit to set its Aerospace to 1/3 of its Tech Level, +1 for the weapons fit. It is unlikely that a dedicated aerospace defence formation would be so poorly equipped.

Aerospace Weapons, Basic: A Basic aerospace outfitting uses the same weapons as a Sparse one, although generally of better quality and much greater numbers. Vehicle-mounted missiles are often exactly the same as shoulder-fired versions but typically in multiple mountings. Basic outfitting is the effective minimum for a dedicated anti-aerospace unit. Basic weaponry allows a non-specialist unit to set its Aerospace to 1/3 of Tech Level, +2 for its weaponry; specialist units use 1/2Tech Level as a base.

Aerospace Weapons, Standard: Standard-level equipment is typically composed of better versions of Basic equipment plus medium-range missiles and heavier or faster-firing weapons. Standard level equipment adds +3 to a unit's Aerospace.

Aerospace Weaponry, Generous: A generous or better allocation of aerospace weaponry requires Quality weaponry. Weapons include gatling lasers and fast-response missile interceptors as well as long-range surface-to-air missiles. If fitted to a vehicle as a defensive system base Aerospace is 1/3 of Tech Level +4 for the weapon systems. Dedicated aerospace units base Aerospace on 1/2Tech Level, +6 for the weapon systems.

Aerospace Weaponry, Lavish: Lavish aerospace weaponry includes heavy surface-to-air weapons and even small PAD (Planetary Aerospace Defence) missiles capable of hitting targets in low orbit. Sophisticated short and medium range weapons in fast-slewing mounts and using 'smart' interfacing between weapons may also be present. Often the dividing line between Generous and Lavish aerospace weaponry is the ability to layer defences and plug the gaps in one system's coverage with another. Lavish levels of equipment are only possible with dedicated aerospace units, where they add +8 to the unit's Aerospace.

Aerospace Weaponry, Excessive: Excessive weaponry indicates provides high capabilities at all ranges, from near-instant response in the case of a point-defence threat to area defence against very distant targets. Heavy PAD missiles and meson guns calibrated for orbital and airborne targets also qualify as Excessive. This level of equipment increases Aerospace by +10.

Aerospace Weapons

Weaponry Level	Aerospace if Non-specialist Unit	Aerospace if Specialist Unit
Minimal	1	N/A
Sparse	1/3 TL+1	N/A
Basic	1/3 TL+2	1/2TL+2
Standard	1/3 TL+3	1/2TL+3
Generous	N/A	1/2TL+6
Lavish	N/A	1/2TL+8
Excessive	N/A	1/2TL+10

Example

The Travellers decide they want their TL8 wheeled APCs to have some aerospace defence capability. The vehicles already mount a 25mm autocannon, so the Travellers retain the weapons but update the mountings to fast-slewing, high-angle systems and fit a co-axial single-shot missile launcher. This is a vehicle-mount version of a standard infantry air defence missile and only marginally effective against grav vehicles. The combination of gun and missile is useful against mid-tech air threats, which is what the Travellers needed. The Referee deems this to be a Basic fit, since it is present on all the vehicles. As a non-specialist unit the Travellers' APCs have Aerospace 5. The guns can still be used for fire support but not at the same time as providing air defence.

SUPPORT ASSETS

Support assets vary considerably. They can include medical, electronic warfare, decontamination, combat engineering and many other fields. A properly equipped unit will have some capability in at least some of these areas and will use 1/3 of their Tech Level as a base when determining its Support characteristic. Equipment levels all the way up to Lavish are possible even with non-specialist units but only a specialist formation operating in its area of expertise can base Support on 1/2of their Tech Level. Some levels of support equipment are bought with Materiel when the unit is formed, although high levels require the purchase of specialist equipment.

Support Equipment, Minimal: Most properly organised military formations provide a modest capability to treat casualties, communicate effectively and conduct basic field engineering. A Minimal level of equipment implies that little equipment has been provided or the unit has had to scrounge for what it needs. Minimal equipment sets Support to 1.

Support Equipment, Sparse: A properly equipped unit has enough medical kits, spades and similar items to get most out-of-combat jobs done, if not all that well. Sparse equipment is assumed to have been provided if the unit has sufficient Materiel when it is formed. Sparse equipment is barely sufficient to allow a specialist unit to function properly but permits Support to be based on 1/2TL for specialist units and 1/3 TL for non-specialists.

Support Equipment, Basic: Basic equipment includes medical facilities suitable for the size of the unit, communications gear able to carry out electronic warfare operations and a good set of hand tools for engineering works. It increases Support by +2. Basic support equipment is obtained by paying 25% extra Materiel when forming the unit or providing this amount later.

Support Equipment, Standard: Standard-level equipment includes some vehicle-mounted engineering tools, a good medical provision and sufficient electronics capability to require a few expert personnel. It is obtained by paying 50% extra Materiel when forming the unit or later. Standard support provision adds +3 to the unit's Support.

Support Equipment, Generous: A generous or better allocation requires Quality equipment. It is obtained by paying 100% extra Materiel when the unit is formed or when it is upgraded. This permits Support to be based on 1/3 TL. For a specialist unit, Support can be based on 1/2TL but this requires the provision of additional equipment. This is likely to be mobile or vehicle-mounted such as engineering or medical variants of armoured vehicles. This equipment must be purchased separately. Generous Support equipment adds +4 to the Support of non-speciality units and +6 to specialists.

Support Equipment, Lavish: Lavish equipment is the highest level possible for non-specialist units. A Lavishly equipped unit can turn its hand to almost any non-combat task and may be able to provide a better service than local specialists. For example, a Lavishly equipped lift infantry formation might find itself acting as the local command communications net and also helping with engineering tasks the locals cannot handle. Lavish equipment is obtained by paying and additional 200% Materiel cost when the unit is raised or upgraded and in addition providing a large amount of high-quality equipment. A Lavishly equipped communications formation, for example, would have a full complement of vehicles stuffed full of sensors, comms gear and electronic warfare equipment. Lavish support equipment adds + 5 to the Support of non-specialist units and +8 to specialists.

Support Equipment, Excessive: Excessive equipment simply means the best available and too much of it. Excessive equipment is obtained by paying an additional 400% Materiel cost when the unit is formed or upgraded and buying huge quantities of the very best equipment available. This might include a mobile field hospital full of top-end autodoc or a fleet of combat engineering vehicles. Excessive support equipment adds +10 to the Support of specialist units.

Support Equipment

Weaponry Level	Requirements	Support if Non-specialist Unit	Support if Specialist Unit
Minimal	Scrounge some equipment	1	N/A
Sparse	Materiel cost paid when the unit was raised	1/3 TL+1	1/2TL+1
Basic	Materiel cost +25%	1/3 TL+2	1/2TL+2
Standard	Materiel cost +50%	1/3 TL+3	1/2TL+3
Generous	Materiel cost +100%, + specialist equipment if specialist formation	1/3 TL+4	1/2TL+6
Lavish	Materiel cost +200% + specialist equipment	1/3 TL+5	1/2TL+8
Excessive	Materiel cost +400% + specialist equipment	N/A	1/2TL+10

Complex Units

Military organisation is for the most part aimed at making it possible to wield a force as a tool of policy, which in turn usually means making administration as simple as possible under the circumstances. In general, formations are organised as neatly as possible and tend to be of a single primary type with a few supports. If this is the case it is easiest to rate the force overall. An infantry battalion with a few mortars is an infantry battalion with a Minimal or Sparse artillery provision. Its bombardment capability at the battalion scale is negligible and will only matter in highly unusual circumstances.

Since the focus of the campaign is on the Travellers, they may wish to (or by circumstances be forced to) build a complex unit. In this case, each of the major sub-units must be rated separately. The Referee can then gain an impression of the force's overall capabilities. If the Travellers have a high-end grav tank embedded in one of their infantry platoons this is going to be highly significant when that platoon engages a similar force without one. However, at the battalion scale a single grav tank is less significant and might be considered to add only a Minimal capability to the force overall. The Referee can choose whether to resolve an action based on the unit as a whole or to use the sub-units. As a rule, if the Travellers want to play an action out in detail and use clever tactics their sub-units will become important – but this can go terribly wrong in some cases.

For example, if the Travellers' company has two platoons of infantry, one with a mix of light grav tanks and a fourth support platoon with artillery weapons, the force overall can be considered an understrength infantry company. The deficit is made up by the tanks and the Referee decides one platoon in four represents a Basic armoured-vehicle complement. One platoon in four of artillery is also Basic. The Travellers can use this overall force to fight as a company or can resolve the actions of the four platoons separately. In this case the artillery might be Standard or better but it bombards as a platoon-sized formation and suffers negative DMs if attacking a larger force; there is a reason why artillery and armoured vehicles are usually concentrated.

An action invoicing this force can be played out as related but separate combats. In this case the artillery bombards the enemy whilst the three platoons resolve their actions using the Combat characteristic. This system allows any or all of a battle to be played out at any level of detail. The force as a whole can resolve the action or parts of it can be abstracted whilst others are played out as an adventure. This does mean that the armoured force could be hugely successful whilst the artillery gets overrun by a counterattack. Of course, the Travellers should be given a chance to remedy the situation with a change of plan or desperate action, perhaps moving the focus from high-level abstraction to a roleplayed firefight as the command team try to hold off the counterattack long enough for the tanks to come racing back.

Mercenary is, after all, about adventure. Logistics, resolution systems and all these game mechanics are just a means to that end.

CHAPTER-FOUR

UNIT AND PERSONNEL TRAITS

Military units tend to develop a reputation over time, which may or may not be deserved. This is in part modelled by the unit's Reputation characteristic but this refers mainly to its perceived degree of expertise and professionalism. A mercenary force may become known for a particular trait and may have a particular affinity for a certain style of combat. Sub-units may also display certain traits either as a result of deliberate decisions made by their leaders or experiences in the field. These traits can also be used to describe other units and their preferred modes of combat.

Traits can be assigned by the Referee when they seem appropriate and may be sought out by the Travellers. For example, the Travellers might want the Close Assault trait and start training and equipping their people accordingly. The Referee will award the trait when the unit has demonstrated it can perform this style of combat better than a normal force, which will usually be after a successful combat in which the tactic was used or perhaps a tough exercise that went well.

Some traits are distinctly undesirable. A unit that has bought cheap equipment from Ivan's Dodgy War Materiel Emporium might find it has gained the Unreliable Kit trait, whilst others are assigned to show a unit has problems or advantages. Traits of this sort can be added or removed any time the Referee thinks the unit qualifies.

UNIT CAPABILITY TRAITS

Unit capability traits relate to the things the unit does better than average for a force of its type. They are always positive and can be acquired by a combination of experience, equipment and training.

Can-Opener: The unit is trained and equipped to engage armoured troops – those wearing combat armour or battle dress – and robots. It is equipped with a greater than average proportion of light anti-armour weapons suitable for engaging infantry-type targets – crunch guns, anti-armour grenades, armour-piercing ammunition for its small arms and so forth. When fighting armoured infantry or robots this force gains DM+2.

Champion Scroungers: The unit contains some personnel who are experts at scrounging or otherwise obtaining items through less-than-official channels. Checks to obtain illicit items are subject to DM+2. This DM can also be applied to items the unit could legitimately get but there is a chance that the goods are less-than-kosher if successful.

Close Assault: The unit is skilled at the 'pell-mell battle' approach, getting close and personal with the enemy. Personnel will tend to be armed with handguns, submachineguns, shotguns and melee weapons in addition to or instead of longer-range small-arms. The same applies to armoured forces that specialise in mixing it up in a fluid mobile action, although 'close' has a different meaning for grav tanks. A unit with the Close Assault trait gains DM+2 in situations where it has been able to close with the enemy or they have foolishly attempted an assault of their own.

Combat Pioneers: The unit's personnel are adept at building field fortifications and demolishing them, clearing obstacles and so forth. All Support checks to do with field engineering or combat pioneering gain DM+2.

Commandos: The unit's personnel are highly trained in sharp, fast commando raids. When conducting small-unit infiltration type operations the force gains DM+2.

Medical Excellence: The unit's medical practices are well above average. Support checks in the medical arena gain DM+2.

Meteoric Assault: The force is highly trained (and must be equipped) for meteoric drops from orbit onto a target. In such situations it gains DM+2. Training levels for all meteoric assault-capable troops are high; to qualify for this trait the unit must be above and beyond.

Sharp-Eyed: The unit has good sensors or just exceptionally observant people. When attempting to detect intruders or conducting reconnaissance this formation gains DM+2.

Sharpshooters: The unit has long-range weapons available and is unusually adept at using them. This might be sniper or marksman rifles for infantry, tank guns, artillery weapons or even missile launchers. When engaging in long-range fire this formation gains DM+2.

Skirmishers: The unit is adept at making a nuisance of itself then breaking contact. It will be equipped with light, fast vehicles if it uses them. When resolving a battle using skirmish tactics, breaking off from combat or making a Mobility check the force gains DM+2.

Stealthy: The unit is adept at using stealth and is equipped with low-observable vehicles and hardware. When attempting to avoid detection or set up a surprise attack this unit gains DM+2.

Tankbuster: The unit is equipped with extra anti-armour weapons – missile launchers, satchel charges, anti-tank mines and the like – and is trained to resist 'tank terror'. Whenever this unit engages a primarily armoured force or one making extensive use of armed vehicles it gains DM+2.

Tough Kit: The unit's equipment is inexplicably survivable. All checks connected with repairs or attempts to scavenge repairable equipment gain DM+2.

Vacc Troopers: The unit must be equipped for operations in minimal or no atmosphere and be extensively trained for the role. It gains DM+2 when operating in such an environment.

UNIT CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS

Unit characteristic traits are more general and describe the current nature or state of the force. Effects of multiple relevant traits can stack.

97%: The unit has great faith in its medical support and the skills of its combat lifesavers. According to rumour 97% of those who the medics get to alive stay that way. This grants DM+1 on MOR checks.

Brutal: The force has gained a reputation for cruelty and vindictiveness, probably deservedly. It gains DM+1 on checks to resolve combat as many of its foes are more concerned about staying out of the unit's hands than winning the fight. However, the force is largely hated, except by zealots who approve such actions in the name of their cause.

Gold-Brickers: The unit contains numerous very lazy individuals who take every opportunity to goof off. This can leave gaps in security or important jobs only part-done. The net result is a reduction of –1 on ECEI.

Hesitant: The unit's personnel have suffered serious blows to their confidence. All checks to determine if Morale is lost suffer DM-1 until the unit's self-confidence is restored.

Honourable Traditions: The force has a tradition of honourable and reliable service. All checks to recruit personnel gain DM+1 and crew Morale is increased by +1.

Mismatched Equipment: The unit's equipment is a hodge-podge of pieces collected from all over, which reduces efficiency. All checks to determine if Company Efficiency Index (CEI) is reduced suffer DM-1.

Notoriety: The unit has gained a bad reputation for mistakes, mutinies and even atrocities. Morale is reduced by –2 and all checks to avoid Morale loss suffer DM-2.

Reputable: The force has gained a reputation for reliability even under difficult circumstances. Negotiations with a prospective client gain DM+1 and other negotiations – such as trying to convince a trapped enemy to surrender – may also receive this DM at the Referee's discretion.

Unlucky: The force seems to be dogged by bad luck and random misfortune. Morale is reduced by –1 and all checks to obtain replacement personnel suffer DM-2.

Unreliable Equipment: At the start of each Mission, the Referee should roll 2D. On a score of 10+ several of the unit's systems or pieces of hardware begin malfunctioning. A series of random intermittent faults impose DM-1 on all tasks carried out by the unit or a randomly determined sub-unit.

PERSONNEL TRAITS

A mercenary campaign is not entirely about the unit as a whole. Many adventures will feature a few individuals either as major characters or as 'scenery' for the Travellers. It may be that some actions, like an inspection of the grav vehicles or a trip to the quartermaster's office, will result in repeated encounters with the same members of the unit or outsiders. They might enjoy occasional comic relief from That Guy Who Keeps Trying To Join Us or dread having to deal with a particularly irritating official.

It would be possible to create the entire unit and everyone it interacts with using the standard *Traveller* Creation rules but that is more work than the benefits justify. Instead, the relevant skills of an individual can be assigned using the system on page 13 and rounded out with additional skills appropriate to their background. If more detail is desired, the personnel traits here can be applied. Indeed, the Referee might choose not to assign skills yet – it is generally enough to assume this person is a competent member of the unit and what will then stand out is any trait they may possess.

Background: The individual has an unusual background. This might be useful at some point, such as when the Travellers are about to plunge into a noxious swamp the individual is actually familiar with. Alternatively it might simply mean they have an unusual accent or odd figures of speech.

Do-Gooder: The individual is curiously unwilling to admit the practicalities of the mercenary trade and constantly urges others to 'do the right thing' even if it goes against the unit's remit or puts people in danger.

Glory Hound: The individual actively seeks glory, medals and rewards. This may be legitimate, in the form of extreme courage, or the glory hound might be building on the work of others or claiming credit for it. It is also possible that the glory-chasing observed by the Travellers is actually the result of a death-wish or desire to atone for some terrible mistake.

High-Flier: The individual has been promoted highly for someone so young. This may or may not have been merited and the individual may or may not feel under pressure to keep overperforming in order to justify the promotions. Everything might be fine and above board, or the apparent high-flier might turn out to be a weak spot in the unit.

History: The individual has a history with someone in the unit or someone it has to interact with. This might be an old romantic relationship, a friendship, rivalry or outright hatred.

In Limbo: The individual was suspended from their former service in a mercenary unit, pending an investigation, and found employment with the Travellers' force in the interim. They may be exonerated, punished or simply let go by the former employer, possibly leaving the Travellers with some decisions to make.

Klutz: The individual messed up a simple task and put others at risk, possibly more than once. They are despised by their colleagues. The Klutz may be desperate to make up for the mistake… or they may not.

Multiskilled: The individual has received cross-training or is simply good at many jobs, so they can provide skills well outside their official area of expertise.

Poltroon: The individual seems like a good soldier but there are rumours they are actually a coward who manipulatives others into taking all the risks then takes the credit. The poltroonery might be suspected or even overt, if the individual is well-connected or somehow protected.

Previous Experience: The individual had an interesting career before joining the unit, some of it in unexpected places. They may have useful experience, such as in weapons procurement, or their experience might be in a completely unrelated academic field.

Psychopath: The individual is a ferocious and dependable fighter but may also be a sadist or clinical psychopath. This may or may not be apparent; the individual may have a calm and even friendly outward air, or they might frighten everyone around them.

Questionable Hero: The individual was decorated for heroism after an incident that claimed a lot of lives. Some idolise them as a true hero, some suspect the individual is suffering from survivor's guilt and might be unstable.

Rumours: There are rumours about this individual. Perhaps there are those who think this is a terrible criminal hiding out under a false identity, or a rich and powerful person gaining experience incognito. They might be an investigator, a journalist or some other undercover operative. Perhaps they are a witness to a crime or avoiding some scandal. The nature of the rumours and their degree of truth is up to the Referee.

Secret: The individual is thought to have a secret. There may be odd gaps in their resume or curiously bland descriptions of some periods, suggesting work in something secretive.

Zealot: The individual holds extreme views, whether openly or otherwise, which may colour their actions. They might actively preach, or quietly wait for an opportunity to put them into practice. Alternatively the individual might be a thorough professional who just happens to have an unusual religious or political belief that makes others uncomfortable.

CHAPTER-FIVE

FINDING EMPLOYMENT

There are always enough brushfire wars, corporate disputes and humanitarian aid operations going on at any given time to keep mercenaries employed. A major conflict might draw in the biggest and best formations, leaving the rest to pick up the smaller tickets. This can lead to a situation where a unit is offered a job it is not all that well suited to, creating opportunities to shine or to meet with disaster.

Unregulated mercenary forces will always exist and in some cases they can be extremely good. However, without some form of regulation every interaction between clients and mercenaries is prone to risk. A unit that chooses to operate this way can take its chances but it is likely to be offered jobs by the more shady of clients and if the client decides to change the terms of the contract at one end it will be down to the mercenaries, unaided, to deal with the problem.

In any environment where mercenaries are operating, some form of licensing agency is likely to exist and it is likely there will be several. A licensing agency exists to protect both the mercenary force and the client, often acting as a broker between units and their prospective clients. The agency itself might be a dedicated body, part of a full-service training and equipment supplier, a government or corporation that licenses mercenaries or some other model. It is even possible that the agency might be a sort of mercenaries' union set up by the bigger and more wealthy formations. If the Referee chooses the licensing agency can be a simple game mechanic in the background or several rival agencies might exist in the setting. This creates opportunities for politics between the agencies and for the Travellers to aspire to registering with the top agency.

Licencing agencies typically require a unit to demonstrate competence both as a military force and a business and, of course, to pay a fee to register. Fees vary but the usual model is three months' average salaries for a unit of the type. A typical infantry company has a monthly salary budget of Cr200000 so registering one with a licensing agency costs Cr600000. This is a great deal of cash for a starting force but the bar is placed to keep amateurs and dilletantes from frivolously registering mercenary units and getting people killed. In addition, a percentage of every ticket is paid to the agency but since this is taken from the client it does not need to be considered by the Travellers.

For this fee, a mercenary unit gains 'accredited' status, which has several benefits. Clients generally prefer to work with accredited mercenaries, since this is seen as a guarantee of both competence and accountability. The usual model is for the client to register the terms of the ticket with the licensing agency and place payment in an account before the ticket begins. Once the mercenaries agree to the terms, the licensing agency handles any disputes that might arise and ensures payment will be made.

The mercenary unit is accountable to its licensing agency, which may investigate allegations against the client or the unit. A mercenary-related campaign might revolve around this part of the business, with the Travellers acting as auditors or troubleshooters for the licencing agency. This can mean investigating a unit's accounts or unravelling allegations of client corruption, which might not normally be all that exciting… but it is taking place in a war zone, which changes everything.

More commonly the Travellers will encounter auditors or requests for an explanation of their actions. A client might dispute completion of a ticket, requiring the Travellers to satisfy the licensing agency that they provided the service that was requested. The Tough Questions faced at the end of a ticket can come from the licensing agency and might impact payment for the ticket.

In return for this accountability mercenaries gain certain protections that otherwise must be negotiated with every client. One is 'legitimate combatant status', which means that the unit cannot be prosecuted for toting military equipment around or blowing up a piece of expensive infrastructure belonging to an enemy faction. A mercenary who surrenders is protected by this status and has the right to fair treatment. Commonly, mercenaries who are captured are simply deported from the combat zone and registered as 'illegitimate' for that conflict. A mercenary who returns to the fight after being declared illegitimate forfeits legitimate combatant status and can be prosecuted for their actions. Indeed, just being there is grounds to lose accredited status or to have a large fine imposed. Arguments for and against such penalties can be handled with the legal system on page 46.

Most, but not all, mercenary contracts include a repatriation clause. This guarantees that a mercenary will be given safe conduct to a place outside the conflict zone and provided with the means to get there. Repatriation clauses sometimes apply to equipment as well as personnel. Registering with an agency may allow the unit to get its tank back after it surrenders, although there may be difficulties to overcome. A mercenary campaign could feature a team of hardware repossession agents tracking down appropriated equipment and 'negotiating' its return. Most forces that capture equipment will want to keep it, and this is a legitimate 'spoils of war' situation, but an agency can usually arrange what amounts to a buy-back at a percentage of the item's cost. A mercenary force will have its personnel repatriated for free but equipment usually costs 25–50% of its purchase or current value. An independent mercenary force could also try this but probably lacks the clout to make a government take notice. The licensing agency, on the other hand, has the resources to make an agreement preferable to a dispute. This is part of the service provided by the agency and of course it makes money on such dealings.

Another common contract clause is almost the opposite of this. Colloquially known as a 'plunder clause', this piece of legislation allows a unit to legitimately take possession of equipment captured in the field. For smaller items these can usually be kept or sold on the surplus market, although registered equipment belonging to another mercenary unit is subject to the buy-back agreement mentioned above. Note that this applies only to equipment registered with the agency. A force might capture some gear and conceal it, avoiding any possibility of having to return it. However, unregistered equipment that is captured by an enemy is not subject to recovery by the agency. Some clients also impose plunder clauses, usually allowing the mercenaries to supplement their pay by legitimised robbery. Sometimes this is done in the hope that economic damage to the enemy will benefit the client but it is a red flag for most reputable mercenary commanders.

WELCOME USER
OBSCURE
UBL
UBL

If the Travellers are registered with an agency or have some other reliable source of work, they may be presented with a list of jobs currently available and can choose which to pursue. More commonly, whether the unit is registered or not, its representatives will have to search around or inquire with the agency for prospective contracts. The vagaries of the mercenary marketplace sometimes mean that the work on offer is not exactly what the Travellers are set up to do. It is usually possible to detach a part of the force to take on a particular ticket and some large formations never actually operate as a single unit. A brigade-sized formation might have a lift infantry battalion deployed in one conflict zone, its training company detached to a cadre ticket somewhere else, its artillery component on hire to a world government and the rest of the force training up ready for the next ticket. Running such a force is a complex business but there is a lot of money to be made by those who can.

Interstellar Operations

It is common for mercenaries to have to travel several parsecs to fulfil a ticket. For simplicity, these rules assume the client can arrange transportation to and from the target. The mercenaries will have to pay their troops for the time spent in transit, including supply and maintenance costs, but the client takes care of transportation. This is to avoid Travellers having to calculate the price of chartering a starship to transport 72 soldiers, three grav tanks and a field headquarters to the destination and back again.

CREATING TICKETS

When the Referee creates potential tickets for mercenaries, the nature of their force should be kept in mind. It is probably a waste of time creating tickets that require a battalion sized formation with tank support when the Travellers are running an elite platoon of commandos. Such a force might actually be able to give the client what they want, albeit by a different means than the straight warfighting force specified, but the Travellers will have a tough time bidding outside their area of expertise.

The key elements of a ticket are Type, Background, Objectives and Details. Key information is presented in the Ticket Header. A full explanation of the situation will normally be provided for the Referee's use but would not be presented to the Travellers as part of the ticket. How much of this information they get depends very much on the amount of research they do before plunging in.

Ticket Header

This is a shorthand summary of the ticket in just a few worlds. It states ticket type, force type required, payment and any critical requirements such as success-only.

Ticket Type

The type of ticket gives an indication of what is required and the level of force required to perform it. Almost all mercenary tickets fall into one of the following categories: Commando, Striker, Warfighting, Cadre, Support or Specialist. Unit size will be typically cited as an equivalent of one of the standard formations. A ticket might specify 'Striker, Company' or 'Cadre, Battalion' and convey enough in those two words to tell a mercenary commander whether it is worth inquiring further. Sometimes additional terms are added, such as 'success-only' or 'fat ticket', which convey a lot of meaning.

Ticket Background

Usually when someone pays for violence to be done to someone else, they have a reason. The background of a ticket may not be entirely revealed to the Travellers – and they may not care. However, the Referee should know who the client is and the target and why the mercenary force is being hired. The client might prefer to conceal their identity and work through an intermediary, which can be risky for the mercenaries unless there is a reputable agent available such as a licensing agency. The client might decline to give their reasons or have ulterior motives but this is not usually a problem so long as the objectives are clear and the success criteria is spelled out.

Objectives

Here the ticket indicates the specifics of what the mercenary unit is supposed to achieve. Objectives are not usually revealed until the unit has shown 'credible interest and capability', for security reasons. The objectives will not be exactly the same as those in the Ticket Success Indicator; they will be a statement of what the client wants, often in very general terms. The success criteria can usually be deduced from the objectives, especially if they are very specific, but there is always a chance that what the client thinks they want is not the same as what will constitute a successful mission.

Details

Any specific requirements the client may have will be presented here, along with information on remuneration, support level and any relevant clauses. Repatriation is standard; it is more common to specify when it will not be included.

EXAMPLE TICKET

Striker, Platoon. Cr175000. Success-only.

Decentralised Mineral Extraction Incorporated (DMEI) has small facilities on multiple worlds. Many of these are frontiers with little effective law enforcement. DMEI personnel have recently begun suffering harassment and even violence from unlicensed competitors who exploit sites already in use by the corporation.

DEMI is offering Cr175000 for a platoon-sized unit to make a strike against one of the larger independent facilities. Loss of life is to be kept to a minimum but the facility is to be occupied and its extraction and processing equipment destroyed. The intention is to underline DMEI's legal position that it has exclusive rights to its registered sites and will not tolerate interference or violence towards its personnel.

The target site is known to be protected by an ad-hoc security contingent numbering around 20 personnel equipped with small arms. Total personnel complement is around 200, of whom an unknown number are armed.

Referee: The situation is more or less as presented. Appeals have been made to law enforcement agencies to protect the company's rights and have not produced significant results. The ticket appears (and is) legal and above-board. The Ticket Success Indicator criteria are easy to deduce – take possession of the site, wreck the machines and try not to kill anyone unnecessarily. Although not specified as such, the client is primarily interested in sending a message and will base the degree of success it perceives by whether the rivals back off and how much bad publicity arises from the matter. Mercenaries who realise this can tailor their actions towards these unspoken goals and do so without triggering a war between the corporation and its rivals. This is a typical 'corporate strike' mission that is all about business, not conflict.

Note that the rate of pay is roughly four months' salaries for a platoon-sized force, with an increment for success-only payment. This rate of pay is reasonable, given that the force might have to travel to a nearby world to carry out the mission and could be spending two weeks in transit either way. No mention is made of support, so the Travellers will have to make sure they provide for this themselves. The brief does not mention it but the client is expecting to base the unit at its local facility and, of course, if it were to be attacked the mercenaries would defend themselves. It might be that the client is hoping to get some free overpowered security for its site before the strike is made but helping field engineers in a skirmish against rivals is not actually mentioned in the contract. Deciding whether or not to do so would be part of the adventure.

Fat and Thin Tickets

The typical mercenary contract makes no provision for the client to support the mercenaries, although usually an area will be made available to use as a base. If the contract specifies Limited Local Support, known colloquially as a 'thin ticket', the client undertakes to provide rations, standard ammunition and the like. If a thin ticket is in place and things go well the Travellers will not pay supply or maintenance costs during their deployment. However, clients are not always particularly adept at supporting military forces, so the supply chain might be interrupted. It might also be sabotaged by enemies – security is unlikely to be very good if the client is a civilian organisation – or plundered by corrupt local officials. In theory, a thin ticket allows use of local repair workshops and the like, although it is common for the mercenaries to have to argue or otherwise persuade the operators to honour their requests.

If the ticket specifies Full Support, known colloquially as a Fat Ticket, the client is responsible for making sure supplies and equipment reach the unit and are of a suitable nature. Where a Thin Ticket can be satisfied by a feeble attempt to get some of what they need to a unit, a Fat Ticket allows the client to be penalised for supplying the wrong gear or failing to secure the supply line. In addition to supply and maintenance costs the client usually also pays a proportion of the unit's salaries. This can be 100% in some cases but is more typically around 25%. Fat Tickets are mostly used where a force is embedded with local units on an ongoing basis, such as a cadre assignment.

Fat Tickets can be used as a tool by the Referee to reduce the amount of book-keeping the Travellers must do. If all they are concerned with is the action, the Travellers can be given a series of Fat Tickets where the payout at the end is small but they get to keep all of it and the details of supply and maintenance are ignored. If the ticket also has a make-good clause the Travellers will have little book-keeping to do and missions are pure profit. However, in compensation for removing the costs and the admin time, the Referee should reduce the payment for such all-inclusive contracts to 10% of the normal offer.

Bonuses, Ongoing Tickets and Payment

Commando tickets are normally of very short duration and some striker tickets are similar. In this case it is common to offer a flat fee for the whole job. Most other tickets are likely to be ongoing, making a flat fee problematic. Some clients will still offer one, for example contracting a force to carry out three months' security work for an agreed amount. When the ticket runs out it can be extended for another agreed period but some renegotiation is likely. For this reason many clients (and mercenary unit operators) prefer an ongoing fee.

Payment for mercenary work is usually based on a multiple of the standard salaries for a unit of that size. For a short-duration ticket it is common to base the fee on one month's salaries. An ongoing ticket usually has a hiring and satisfactory-completion bonus, with payments for each month or part thereof the unit is on deployment. These figures are guidelines only, however, and many clients offer totally unrealistic fees for jobs they may or may not know are more difficult than stated.

Bonuses vary considerably. Many clients offer a success or good-conduct bonus even if the ticket is not success-only. This serves as reassurance that the mercenaries will put the effort in. A hiring bonus is also common on longer-term contracts. The sums involved are entirely up to the client and can vary considerably, although the usual intent is to make it attractive for mercenaries to take a relatively low-paying ongoing contract. Once in steady work they are unlikely to look elsewhere even if the contract permits it.

COMMANDO TICKETS

A commando ticket is usually straightforward in concept but difficult to execute. Typically the mercenaries will be expected to get into a place they are not supposed to be and destroy or remove something. The actual duration of the mission may only be a few hours but reconnaissance, preparation and getting into launch position can take days or weeks. Commando tickets are normally success-only, which is reflected in the payment. A unit that moves quickly from one commando ticket to the next can make a great deal of money but may suffer personnel burnout or take casualties that cannot easily be replaced. Commando tickets are normally aimed at section or platoon level units, although occasionally a massed raid will require a larger force.

Commando tickets may specify a completion-by date rather than a specific time they are to be executed, unless there is a very narrow window of opportunity. For example, a commando mission to take out an orbital defence installation just as the assault force arrives to attack the starport must be completed within a critical time period. On the other hand, a mission to kidnap or assassinate a key figure might be executed at the unit's discretion. This allows the force to set up the best possible scenario but they are paying salaries whilst they collect information and conduct reconnaissance so will feel internal pressure to get on with the mission.

Commando missions are normally based on the destruction of an object or installation or the elimination or kidnap of a person. They are usually conducted in an in-and-out basis, although slow infiltration is as common as a high-speed insertion. Base fees for a commando ticket are six months' salaries for a typical unit of the type, modified for difficulty and any additional factors that might apply, on a success-only basis. The client may offer part of the fee as a bonus, or add a bonus on top, but typically what is offered is a flat fee determined by the amount of risk the unit faces. Commando tickets are always hazardous but having to infiltrate and exfiltrate through very hostile territory can push the price up significantly.

STRIKER TICKETS

Striker tickets are one of the most common mercenary contracts. The force is contracted to make one or more strikes against hostile targets, usually with the goal of destruction or capture. Striker missions can be carried out by almost any sized unit, although platoon or company sized forces are best suited to most operations. A striker unit typically has considerable leeway about how and when the attack is to be made and will normally have a completed-by date rather than a specific time. There are exceptions and sometimes circumstances dictate the strike has to be launched at a given time or place.

Fees for Striker missions are normally based on four months' salaries for the unit in question, modified for difficulty and other circumstances. Payment is usually success-only.

WARFIGHTING TICKETS

Warfighting tickets are often open-ended, based on duration of hostilities plus a mopping-up period. Clients who hire mercenaries for a specific length of time sometimes find themselves re-hiring them at a higher fee for a conflict that has gone on longer than expected. Once hired for a warfighter contract, mercenaries are expected to obey the orders of local commanders and may alternate between defensive and offensive operations. There is considerable precedent about how hard a mercenary formation can be used and most contracts include clauses that allow the force to refuse combat or even declare the contract completed if they are used unfairly.

Warfighting contracts are the preserve of larger forces, for the most part, but platoons and companies might find themselves as part of a composite formation with other mercenaries or embedded within a local force. Payment is typically based on three times the unit's salary budget with a hiring and completion bonus. Warfighter contacts are usually payable on satisfactory service whether or not the war is won.

CADRE TICKETS

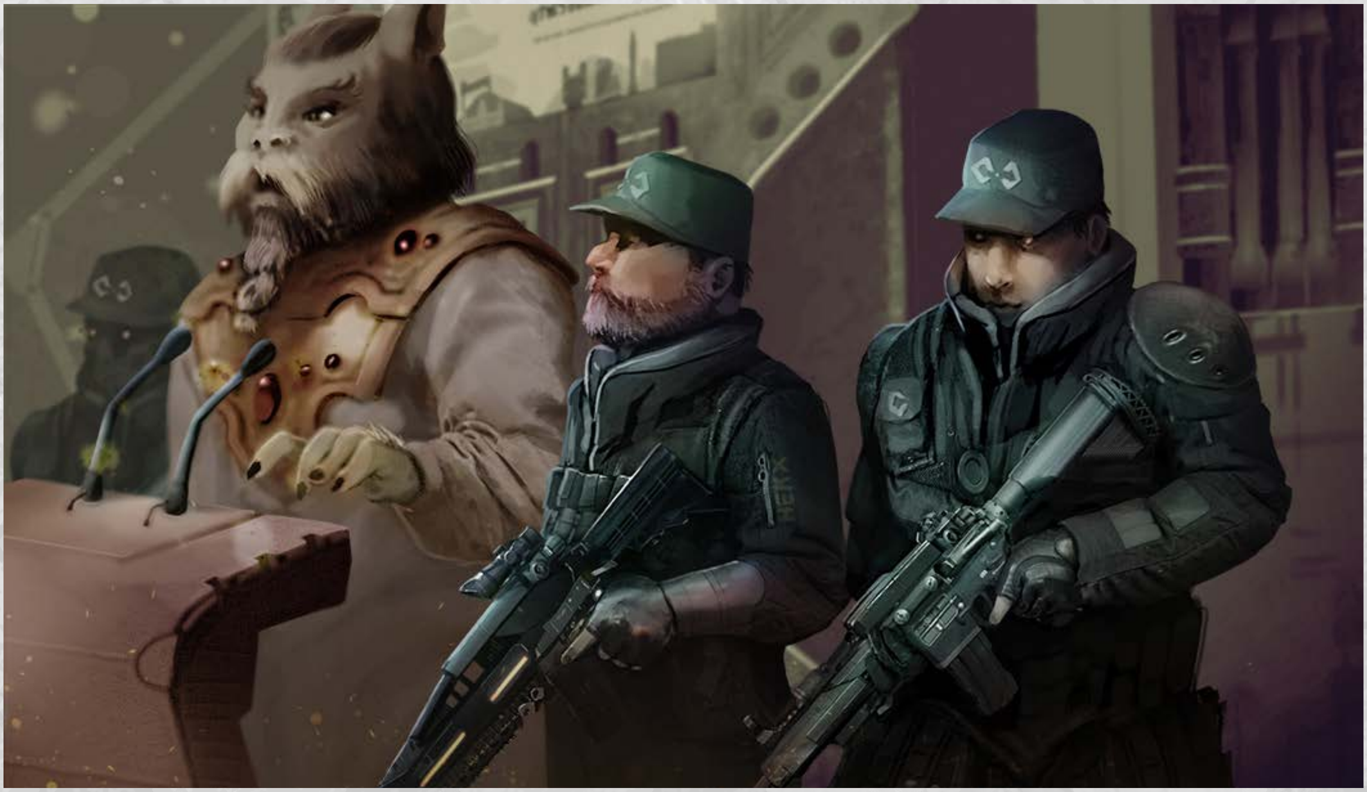
Cadre tickets come in two main types. Peacetime cadre contracts require the unit to provide training and support to local forces and tend to be safe, if a bit dull. Active cadre tickets require the unit's personnel to operate with local forces, providing advice and training as well as setting an example when the locals get into a fight. Some cadre tickets are more about inducing the locals to fight than teaching them; the mercenaries may be openly or tacitly present to keep the locals from running away.

Cadre missions are usually performed by platoon to company sized forces, which will have personnel detached to carry out all manner of missions. A typical cadre assignment pays 200% of the force's salary budget per month and includes a 'thin ticket' provision to provide all the supplies and maintenance the unit needs. A hiring bonus equal to another month of salaries is commonly paid. An active cadre ticket may pay as much as three times the unit's salary budget each month but this tends to happen only when the cadre are leading the locals in combat. More commonly the figure is 250% or 200% plus a combat bonus. Payment is upon satisfactory service, usually determined by the performance of the local forces.

SECURITY TICKETS

Security tickets can be quite passive, such as a force guarding an important person or installation, or may be active in terms of sweeping for insurgents. Passive security tickets are normally paid for satisfactory service, determined by whether or not the principal or installation is still intact at the end, whereas active security tickets are more commonly paid for a period of operations or a set of specified results. For example, a force might be hired success-only to pacify a region, defined as not having any insurgent incidents for a certain time, or the capture or elimination of key insurgent figures.

The size of the force required varies considerably. A platoon or section is sufficient for most guard jobs; a small team might suffice as bodyguards while company and battalion sized units tend to carry out large-scale counter-insurgency work, so payment varies. A typical passive security job pays 200% of the unit's salaries plus a possible bonus if the client survives and might be success-only if an attack is expected. Active security typically pays the same but with a bonus equal to a month's salaries or more and a 'thin ticket' arrangement to reduce the unit's ongoing costs. Transportation tickets requiring something or someone to be protected are normally considered passive security operations.



SUPPORT TICKETS

Support tickets vary according to the unit's capabilities. Terms are usually similar to an active cadre, plus an increment for advanced capabilities. Typically this is 10–20% per Tech Level the force is ahead of what is available locally and at least 25% if the force outperforms local versions by virtue of training and experience rather than equipment.

SPECIALIST TICKETS

Specialist tickets vary considerably. As a general guideline, a specialist force's fee starts at around 250% of its monthly salary burden and increases with difficulty, danger and lack of competitors for the contract. Specialist contracts can often be taken by ordinary mercenary units if they have at least some capability in the field. The Referee must determine the fee for specialist operations on a case-by-case basis.

OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES

The basic fee for a mercenary ticket can be amended for the level of opposition expected, how distasteful the job might be, whether or not it is success-only and any other factors that apply. Some of these are summarised below.

Mercenary Remuneration Summary

Mission or Circumstance	Typical Remuneration Per Month of Operations
Commando	6 Months Salaries
Striker	4 Months Salaries plus bonus
Warfighting	3 Months Salaries plus bonus
Cadre	2 Months Salaries plus bonus
Active Security	2 Months Salaries plus thin ticket and bonus
Passive Security	2 Months Salaries plus thin ticket and possible bonus
Support	2 Months Salaries plus bonus for advanced capabilities.
Success-only	+25% or more
Low level of danger	–25%
High level of danger or intense combat	+25%
Extreme danger	+50% or more
Hazardous environment, for example vacuum	+10%

NEGOTIATING THE FEE

The figures given are guidelines only. The Referee should use this to determine what the client is offering, rounding to a satisfactory figure. At this point the Travellers can negotiate. Negotiations can be resolved using the rules on page 113 of *Book 1* or can be abstracted by a simple Persuade check with the unit's Reputation as an additional DM. The Effect of this check is added to a 2D roll on the Fee Offers table.

If the negotiation is happening the other way around and the Travellers are asking for a particular fee, the Referee should determine what the client would be likely to offer using the method above. The Travellers may make an Average (8+) Persuade check with the unit's Reputation as an additional DM. This check is modified by DM-1 for every 10% more the mercenaries want than the client would offer and DM+1 for every 20% less they ask. Success indicates

Difficulty Level and Payment

The Referee should keep in mind that the client may not be aware of exactly how difficult a mission might be and payment will normally be based on what the client thinks they can get away with paying whilst still getting the job done. The mercenaries might take on a low-end job and find it is a quagmire, or be offered an outrageously high fee for something quite straightforward. If they are stuck in a contract that is too tough for them, the Travellers can always negotiate a release from the contract. This will cost them, of course, in financial and reputation terms but the alternative is continuing to lose money and people.

Note that whilst fees are given as salary-months this is a guideline only. A commando ticket for a section-sized force is listed as four months' salaries but this is a guideline only. An infantry section's salary budget is Cr9000 per month, so the Referee's starting point for calculating the mission fee is Cr36000. Success-only and an expectation of significant opposition – this is common with commando missions – increases this to Cr54000. The Referee rounds this to Cr50000 as an opening offer, with a bonus of Cr10000 if the mission's criteria are fully met.

the client agrees to their fee. At the Referee's discretion the client will make a counteroffer 10% lower for every point of negative Effect but if the Travellers' demands are ridiculously high the client may walk away unless they are desperate for something only the Travellers can provide.

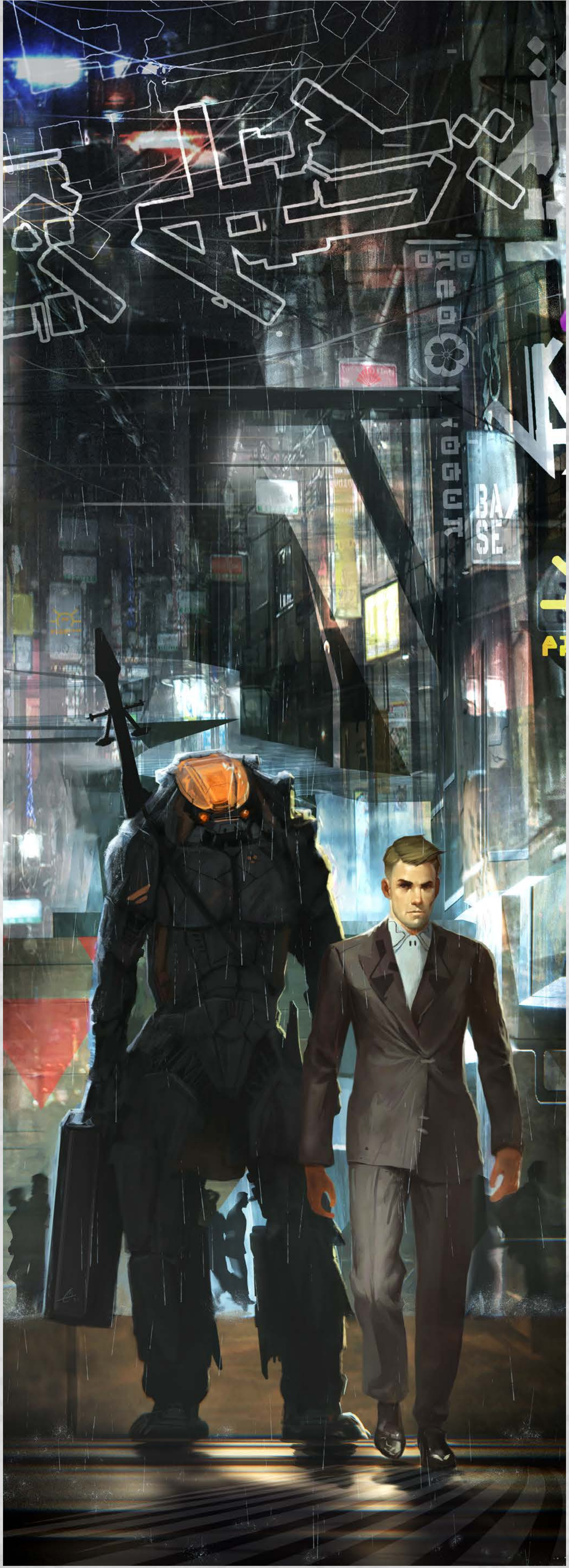
Fee Offers

2D+ Modifiers	Final Offer
0-	50%
1-2	70%
3-4	80%
5-6	90%
7-8	100%
9-10	110%
11-12	120%
13-14	130%
15-16	140%
17-18	150%
19-20	175%
21+	200%

Example

A client wants a company-sized force of grav-mobile armoured vehicles to carry out a striker mission and envisages the force will be in the field for only a few days. The fee for the mission is based on 4 months' salaries for the unit, which are Cr150000 per month on average. No matter what force is eventually hired, the client's offered fee is based on this estimate. They advertise the job for a fee of Cr750000, success-only. This is pretty normal for such a mission carried out by a company of light grav armour and if three guys in an air/raft can pull it off they probably deserve the money!

The Travellers could bid for the job by asking for a lower or higher price and trying to get the client to agree but they decide instead just to negotiate the details. Their unit has Reputation DM+2 and their negotiator provides DM+3. They roll a 6, modified to 11. After asking for all manner of small extras, costs covered, minor bonuses and an entirely imaginary set of overheads covered, the Travellers and their client agree on 120%. The job will pay Cr900000, success-only and the Travellers will take care of their own supply needs.



CHAPTER - SIX

RUNNING THE UNIT

The Travellers will want to acquire more and better personnel, equipment and weaponry after each ticket. This is entirely reasonable but the Referee should avoid giving them too much, too soon. Rapid acquisition of goodies leads to 'campaign bloat' where the Travellers are all generals commanding a huge army and have no reason to get their hands dirty any more. Instead, a mercenary campaign should be like fighting a battle; advancing towards eventual victory by the accrual of advantages and the overcoming of obstacles. The Travellers might get lucky once in a while but overall they should have to work for their successes.

Running a mercenary unit is a complex business and there are many opportunities for adventure outside of contracts and tickets. The Travellers might find themselves accused of war crimes or scrambling to get enough equipment together so they can take on a lucrative contract with very specific requirements. They might even undertake some 'speculative' operations on their own behalf under the cover of running a legitimate mercenary operation. The mercenary marketplace is a dangerous world and those who do well become adept at solving all manner of non-military problems.

REPAIRS AND REPLACEMENTS

When a force engages in combat, its casualty percentage applies equally to equipment and vehicles. If field repairs are undertaken during a deployment, the vehicles may be returned to service but will still need to be properly repaired afterward. Hardware damage is in the same categories as personnel casualties; Slight, Minor and Serious, with Serious casualties further subdivided.

For equipment, this translates as follows:

Slightly damaged hardware can be returned to full function in the normal post-ticket maintenance rotation, at nothing more than its normal maintenance cost (see page 18).

Minor Damage to a piece of hardware requires a modest amount of work and some spares. The cost is double the unit's normal maintenance cost.

Serious Damage is subdivided into three categories: Damaged, Heavily Damaged and Destroyed.

Damaged hardware costs three times the unit's normal maintenance cost to repair. Heavily Damaged hardware can be returned to service with a great deal of work, costing five times the normal maintenance cost. Destroyed hardware cannot be repaired. It may be possible to scavenge a few small components but the item needs to be replaced.

The cost to repair hardware is based on the cost to maintain it for one month. This is calculated at 1 Materiel per shipping ton, modified for the item's propulsion system. Grav tanks are more expensive to repair than static-mounted anti-aircraft weapons but fortunately they are also more resilient. Hardware under repair is assumed to be maintained at the same time; maintenance costs

Hardware Repairs

System	Slightly	Minor	Damaged	Heavily Damaged
Static or Towed Mount	Shipping x1	Shipping x2	Shipping x3	Shipping x5
Wheeled Vehicle	Shipping x2	Shipping x4	Shipping x6	Shipping x10
Watercraft	Shipping x2.5	Shipping x5	Shipping x7.5	Shipping x12.5
Tracked Vehicle	Shipping x5	Shipping x10	Shipping x15	Shipping x25
Aircraft	Shipping x8	Shipping x16	Shipping x24	Shipping x40
Grav Vehicle	Shipping x10	Shipping x20	Shipping x30	Shipping x50

do not need to be paid for the repair period. Maintenance cost is included in the Hardware Repairs table for Slightly damaged items.

When a vehicle or system is to be repaired, the Traveller in charge of repairs must make an Average (8+) Mechanic check, reducing the cost of repairs by 10% per point of Effect down to a minimum of 50%. Negative Effect increases the cost. If the unit has a small workshop or mobile workshop available, DM+2 applies. A full vehicle workshop of the sort found at major repair yards grants a further cost reduction of 25%.

If the Travellers wish to reduce costs another way, they can come up with a suitable plan and execute it. Perhaps they will be able to scavenge from a battlefield or get some cheap parts on the black market. Any such action requires problem-solving and perhaps an adventure, which can only be a good thing. These rules are not intended to be a straitjacket for the Travellers; they instead present the Travellers with problems to solve, enabling them to generate their own adventures.

Example

The Travellers' G/carrier is thoroughly trashed after being disabled by a missile. Nominal repair cost is its shipping tonnage multiplied by 50 – a total of 750 Materiel. The Travellers have been buying Materiel in bulk, at MCr6 for 1,000 Materiel but this still represents a cost of MCr4.5 to repair an MCr11.5 vehicle! The Travellers have a mobile workshop and their maintenance and repair officer succeeds on her Mechanic check with Effect 1. This reduces the cost by 10%, or 75 Materiel. The Travellers still need to use MCr4.05 worth of Materiel to make the repair. They start looking at alternative options and discover there are several wrecks in a nearby valley controlled by insurgents. The Travellers begin planning a 'speculative' mission to grab critical components. This might be risky, so the Referee decides that the Travellers will be able to get almost everything they need plus a few unexpected bonus items... assuming, of course, they succeed.

UNIT EXPERIENCE AND EFFICIENCY DEGRADATION

At the end of a ticket, the Ticket Success Indicator, or TSI (see *Book 1*, page 43) is used to determine how well things went. It is not easy to impress everyone when taking routine tickets and completing them in a mediocre manner but a unit can gain experience this way. The TSI can mandate increases to Reputation and Morale but learning from experience requires some post-ticket reflection and perhaps training to implement the lessons learned.

When a unit stands down from a ticket its Effective CEI is compared to its actual CEI. It is quite likely that ECEI will be lower than CEI due to the inevitable friction inherent in military operations. In most cases ECEI will be reset to equal CEI after a short period of regrouping and rest, although if some circumstance exists that might permanently affect CEI the Referee may modify CEI accordingly. For example, if a unit loses much of its communications equipment and does not replace it, the loss will reduce CEI. Under normal circumstances routine end-of-ticket actions will remedy the majority of problems.

CEI, and the DEI of sub-units, can be increased through experience gained in the field. The Referee will award experience points to the unit as a whole, which can be spent at the Travellers' discretion. Experience gained on a ticket is equal to the TSI score earned by the Travellers. A high-risk, difficult ticket will potentially earn the unit more experience than a routine task carried out in a mediocre manner. A force that engages in short, violent missions will gain experience more quickly than one that performs long, relatively safe training or security deployments as there are far more learning opportunities at the sharp end.

Note that experience points are the same no matter what the unit size might be. It takes just as many points for a battalion to qualify for a new trait or CEI increase as it does for a platoon. This assumes the battalion as a whole participated in the ticket. If a detached company carried out the missions whilst the rest of the force loafed about in barracks the Referee may assign experience only to that company. It can be used to improve that company or given to the unit as a whole. If this is done, the amount of experience gained is proportional to the sub-unit deployed. For example, if a single company gained 12 points of experience whilst the other two companies of a three-company battalion did nothing, the force as a whole gets 1/3 of the experience points, or four points.

A unit on deployment is assumed to maintain its skills by virtue of them being in use or potentially in use. At the end of a deployment, skills begin to atrophy whilst the unit is stood down. A force that is in training (see page 16) does not lose skills but one that is just waiting around for a contract will. Experience points are lost at the rate of one per week after the first that the unit is not on a ticket or engaging in training. If part of the unit is training, the rate of loss is slowed proportionally to the component engaged in training. In the case before, if the three-company battalion has one company in training and the other two resting it loses two experience points per three weeks.

Inevitably, most units will lose a few points whilst they are resting up. Retaining some of the unit's experience to cover this deficit will prevent atrophy of skills – essentially the waiting period before the next ticket cancels out some of the experience gained but for most forces this is not much of a problem. A proper rest and reorganisation is necessary after a combat deployment and a point or two of experience lost is part of the price of doing business. However, if experience is negative at the start of the next ticket the negative points must be 'spent' in the form of taking a negative effect. More commonly, experience will be positive and can be spent to improve the force or its sub-units.

Experience points are spent either at the level of the whole force or its top-level sub-units. Experience can be used to purchase an increase in Morale, Reputation, Influence, Company Efficiency Index for the force or Detachment Efficiency Index for a sub-unit, or a trait for the force as a whole or a sub-unit. Each purchase with experience points must be accompanied by an appropriate action on the part of the unit – in other words the Travellers cannot treat experience as a dry game-mechanics exercise but must roleplay the situation and come up with a plausible reason for the increase in capabilities. A force engaged in an exercise or other activity intended to implement experience is considered to be undergoing training and must pay the supplies cost for one week of activity por improvement purchased.

Experience Purchases

Purchase	Experience Point Cost
Reduce DEI of a sub-unit by –1	–10
Reduce CEI by –1	–50
Reduce MOR by –1	–5
Reduce Reputation by –1	–10
Reduce Influence by –1	–10
Remove a positive trait (whole unit)	–50
Remove a positive trait (sub-unit)	–10
Gain a negative trait (whole unit)	–25
Gain a negative trait (sub-unit)	–5
Increase DEI of a sub-unit by +1	20
Increase CEI by +1	100
Increase MOR by +1	10
Increase Reputation by +1	25
Increase Influence by +1	15
Gain a positive trait (whole unit)	80
Gain a positive trait (sub-unit)	20
Remove a negative trait (whole unit)	75
Remove a negative trait (sub-unit)	15

Negative values indicate the number of negative experience points annulled by the action. A unit with negative experience at the start of a ticket suffers no ill-effects if it has better than -5 experience, but will suffer an increasing penalty if it has more. Negative experience can also be used to determine how badly hanging around barracks with no contracts or a similar long period of inactivity affects a unit.

Negative Experience Penalties

Negative Experience Level	Penalty
0 to -5	No penalty
-6 to -10	MOR -1 during this ticket
-11 to -20	ECEI and MOR -2 during this ticket
-21 to -30	ECEI and MOR -2 during this ticket
-31 to -40	ECEI and MOR -2 during this ticket
-41 to -50	ECEI and MOR -2 during this ticket
-51 or worse	ECEI and MOR -2 during this ticket

REORGANISATION AND PERSONNEL ISSUES

A period of regrouping is necessary at the end of a mission or ticket, in order to get people and equipment back where they should be. If the Travellers decide they should be somewhere else on a permanent basis they will have to reorganise the unit to accommodate the change. Expansion or reorganisation might necessitate promotion of personnel within the unit. The Travellers are free to assign whatever rank they like to personnel and use any titles they see fit. However, there is a degree of equivalency between mercenary units and a platoon commander is a platoon commander. If the Travellers want to assign this person the rank of Super-Sparkly-Subaltern they can try if they like but silly titles will undermine the professional reputation of the unit and annoy its members. Likewise, over-promoting personnel for their position will also affect the unit's reputation. A captain in charge of a platoon might be questionable but outsiders may accept there is a reason. Giving the platoon commander the rank of lieutenant-colonel will likely result in ridicule.

The Travellers may have to correct the behaviour of their personnel. Mercenaries are in a difficult position since they have to maintain discipline yet attract new members to the force when needed. A draconian regime will put off potential recruits but excessive leniency will turn the force into a rabble. Mercenaries agree to accept discipline when they take a contract with the unit and commanders have discretion about how to go about it.

Few units will impose a death penalty on members but officers are usually empowered to shoot someone in the field ‘if absolutely necessary’. This is only likely in order to prevent a war crime or disaster, such as a critical member of the unit deserting their post at a time when their action will get others killed. Under such circumstances an officer may threaten to shoot the deserter and the threat would be meaningless if it could not be carried out. If a member of the unit refuses to submit to discipline and decides to resist arrest with lethal force the shooting is not a disciplinary act and would be justified (or not) by circumstances rather than any powers vested in the officer.

The commanders of the unit will typically grant rewards for satisfactory service including passes for additional R&R time, exemption from unpleasant duties and similar minor perks. Likewise, they can hand out minor punishments such as confinement to quarters, extra duties or suspension of leave privileges. Bonus shares of a ticket payoff are used as an incentive by many units but a reward right now is often more effective than the prospect of more money sometime in the future. Commanders who present a good example and reward satisfactory performance generally have less discipline problems than those who hand out harsh punishments for every small infraction.

Most unit members will consider minor punishments such as extra duty or an unpleasant task to be ‘fair enough’ or just part of the mercenary life. Those who affect the individual’s career or future prospects will be resented more, even if they are deserved. Ultimately, a mercenary commander can dismiss personnel or hand them over to local law enforcement agencies if they have done something to attract attention. A mercenary who has been dismissed from one unit is unlikely to find a slot with a high-end force, although there are always units who will take anyone they can get.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

The Travellers can implement a full court-martial against any of their personnel if they want, although more commonly a tribunal of officers will deal with matters in a summary way. Accusations made against the mercenary unit as a whole or some of its members may result in appearances in civilian or military court. It is even possible that a local government might initiate legal proceedings in a civilian court in the hope it can win the right to try mercenaries under its military court system. More commonly, local authorities will request cooperation from the mercenary force in arresting some of its members and try them under local law as visiting civilians.

Mercenaries acting on behalf of a governmental client have legal protections against being prosecuted – providing they do not commit war crimes. However, sometimes one party in a dispute refuses to recognise the legitimacy of mercenary operations and will attempt to prosecute mercenaries who fought against it. Mercenaries that are part of a properly registered force have the protection of the licensing agency – and mercenary operations have at times been instigated by the licensing agency itself against those who ignored its status.

Legal action can sometimes be used as a weapon in a conflict. A well-aimed writ can take a mercenary unit out of the campaign, at least for a time, and whilst this gambit rarely works there is always someone willing to try it. In the event the Travellers are caught up in any sort of legal proceedings the matter can be decided with a couple of Advocate checks if the Referee thinks this appropriate. A more detailed resolution provides opportunities for roleplaying and might lead to adventures if the Travellers have to obtain (or tamper with) evidence, find witnesses or rescue them from hostiles, and otherwise take direct action to ensure they get the result they are hoping for.

The outcome of a court case such as a war crimes investigation depends partly on the legal skills of the people involved but mainly rests upon the evidence each side has to offer. This may or may not be real; evidence can be fabricated or suppressed, witnesses can lie or be intimidated. Even if the Travellers are innocent they can be convicted – and there is still a chance to escape justice even if they are guilty. Clients sometimes use a legal proceeding as an excuse not to pay the full fee, typically accusing the mercenaries of something unpleasant or of not fulfilling the terms of their contract. This can attract the ire of the licensing agency but minor legal actions are typically beneath its radar. A common gambit is to threaten a lawsuit in the hope the mercenaries will take a reduced fee and go away and occasionally mercenaries will have to sue their clients for payment.

The first stage in any legal proceeding is to determine what evidence each side has available. This may or may not have any resemblance to what actually happened and undermining the opposition's evidence is a common legal tactic.

Solid, Reliable Evidence provides DM-4 on the Outcome table
Weak or Unreliable Evidence provides DM-2 on the Outcome table
Little or Conflicting Evidence provides no DM

Images from surveillance showing the defendant taking the actions in question would count as solid and reliable, whilst testimony from witnesses might or might not be considered unreliable in this context – much depends on who the witnesses are and how sympathetic the court is to them. Members of the local armed forces, who are blatantly guilty of the war crime the Travellers are accused of, might be considered solid and reliable by a corrupt court. Actions that can be explained in more than one way would also be considered weak evidence by most courts but one that has a vested interest in a particular outcome might not see it that way.

Once the Referee has decided what evidence exists and how the court will view it, the matter proceeds through the following stages. These are presented for a criminal matter but the same process is used for a civil suit.

Presentation of Evidence

Evidence for and against the defendant is presented. This can be abstracted as the Referee informing the Travellers of what level of evidence they face. There are opportunities here for skulduggery and adventure as the Travellers try to obtain, suppress or fabricate evidence, or influence the court in other ways.

Case for the Prosecution

The prosecution makes as much as possible of the available evidence, which can be abstracted with an Average (8+) Advocate check (EDU). A typical local prosecutor will have DM+2. A more serious issue will usually require a prosecutor with DM+4 and for very serious matters such as investigation of atrocities a senior legal figure with DM+6 will be appointed. The Travellers may manipulate this process by throwing legal obstacles in the way, for example finding a law that says the case has to be tried at a particular place and time, which forces the prosecution to use whoever is available. Enemies of the Travellers might do the same.

Case for the Defence

The defence then refutes the evidence or uses it to demonstrate innocence, again abstracted by an Average (8+) Advocate check (EDU). The Travellers can provide their own defence or use the defender assigned to them. This individual will have an Advocate DM one less than that of the prosecution.

The Travellers may also attempt other measures at this stage. Impassioned pleas for clemency and justice are unlikely to sway anyone but if the Travellers can come up with some reason to mitigate the consequences of their actions or even set aside what would otherwise be a guilty verdict, they can try. A Difficult (10+) Persuade or Diplomat check is normally required, although another skill might be used – for example, Tactics to demonstrate the Travellers had no better options or Medic to show they were suffering from stress and fatigue at the time. Evidence can be undermined by those with expert knowledge, such as using Gun Combat to show that the fatal rounds were not fired from the Travellers' position or with their weapons.

Outcome

The Referee should roll 2D, subtracting any DM for evidence against the Travellers and subtracting the Effect of the prosecution's Advocate check, before adding the Effect of the defence and any additional measures. Consult the Outcome table for the outcome of the hearing.

Outcome

2D	Result
0 or less	The defendant is found guilty and vilified beyond what is normal. DM-2 applies on the Punishment table and a local outcry begins that may have additional effects on the Travellers and their unit.
1–2	Guilty.
3–4	Guilty, with some mitigating factors. DM+2 is applied to the Punishment table.
5–7	Acquitted. The defendant is found to be innocent of the charges and suffers no legal penalties.
8–9	Honourably Acquitted. The defendant is found completely innocent and a few praiseworthy deeds are brought to light.
10–11	Praise and Thanks. The defendant is not only acquitted of the charges but is found to have acted in a way that brings credit to their unit.
12 or more	The trial is considered to have been a fiasco and a disgrace. The defendant is found to be entirely innocent and the prosecution may face investigation.

Punishment

The Punishment table is subject to some interpretation, depending on local circumstances. In some cases the Travellers can ignore a local judgement and move on but this might harm their reputation and therefore their business. A judgement passed by the licensing agency cannot be ignored if the Travellers want to keep their license.

No modifiers are applied for minor offences. For major offences such as stealing munitions or refusal to obey orders, DM-4 applies. DM-8 is applied in very serious cases such as mutiny or aiding the enemy. Some actions may have automatic effects, such as where a particular crime carries a mandatory death sentence.

Punishment

2D	Result
0 or less	The court imposes the most severe penalty it can. This might be death in the case of atrocities and almost certainly means a long period of incarceration.
1–2	The Travellers are pressed to dismiss the soldier from the unit. Jail time is likely whether or not this is the case.
3–4	The defendant is sentenced to a punitive assignment. This may be imprisonment, or service in a punishment unit. The unit will be heavily censured, imposing DM-2 on attempts to find contracts or recruit personnel for the next 2D months.
5–7	The defendant or their unit is fined and publicly censured, imposing DM-1 on attempts to find contracts or recruit personnel for the next 2D months.
8–9	The defendant receives a token period of imprisonment and their unit is fined a modest amount with the expectation its commanders will take it out of their pay.
10–11	The defendant or their unit receives a token fine and a stern reprimand.
12 or more	The defendant's extenuating circumstances or pleas for mercy result in nothing more than a reprimand and a record of the incident, which might have consequences for future dealings.

MEDALS AND REWARDS

Clients sometimes award medals to mercenaries who serve them well. Doing so in the hope of a reduced fee rarely works but in some cases there is genuine appreciation for what the mercenaries have done. It is not uncommon for a grateful world government to grant permission for a mercenary unit to wear the campaign medal for the actions they served in and Commanders are sometimes given local decorations for exceptional service. Beyond this, mercenaries cannot expect to win a lot of medals during their service. Some units have a system of competence badges, long-service insignia and even medals for gallantry but, for the most part, there is a pragmatic approach that soldiering is a job you get paid for and doing it properly means you stay employed. Encouraging people to be heroes is not usually desirable.

Mercenaries may be offered a place in local armed forces, usually with a promotion to go with it. This can leach experienced personnel from a unit but can be beneficial, especially if the unit works with that client again in the future. Relatively few mercenaries take this route and it is not always a comfortable environment they enter since local officers tend to resent a stranger being inserted over their heads. Questions about national loyalty are also common.

Mercenary service is typically seen as a job rather than a calling and those who do it for a living have their reasons. If those reasons are not good enough they will get out, one way or another, and if they are good enough then rewards are not really needed. There are units whose uniforms are festooned with medal ribbons but they are usually seen as amateurish by those who simply get the job done and collect their payment.

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY BOOK 3: IN THE FIELD

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY BOOK 3: IN THE FIELD

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INTRODUCTION

This volume presents numerous tickets for mercenary forces of varying size and composition. These can be modified to suit a different force or used as the basis for other adventures. For example, the battalion-level tickets could be scaled down so that a smaller mercenary unit can participate or the Referee can assume some other force is distracting most of the opposition whilst the Travellers take on as much as they can handle. The ticket's specified mission might be carried out by a different force whilst the Travellers provide support or undertake a related action, in which case the focus is on the Travellers and the ticket becomes backstory.

The tickets presented in this volume are intended for use in any *Traveller* campaign and are independent of Charted Space and the Third Imperium universe. Some are standalone incidents, which can be placed in any suitable location, whilst others form part of a wider conflict or confrontation. In addition to the tickets presented here these situations provide a backdrop for further mercenary operations and adventures.

The Referee should keep in mind that a mercenary campaign is not just about performing missions specified by the tickets. It is entirely possible to have standard *Traveller* adventures during a ticket or between tickets. These may be related to the ticket's mission, or caused by it, but it may be that the mercenaries just stumble into a situation unrelated to their mission and have to deal with it.

UWPs are not presented for the worlds upon which these tickets are set. This is deliberate, allowing the Referee to place the adventure on any suitable planet. Minor tweaks should not affect the course of the ticket – having to wear a filter mask because of atmospheric taint or bouncing a little because the gravity is low are not major factors. However, the Referee may have to factor in the lethality of an environment or any special conditions that may apply.

The mercenaries may have to travel between planets to fulfil their contracts. They need to pay salaries and maintenance costs during the weeks in jump but it is assumed that transportation is arranged and paid for by the client. Long periods spent in cramped conditions aboard starships can be detrimental to efficiency and the ability of the mercenaries to get along with one another, so Travellers should be mindful of the need to provide suitable rest and recuperation for the force once they reach their destination. Clients might want the mercenaries to go straight into action at full efficiency but often they can have one or the other – immediate action or effective action. Making the client understand that is part of the mercenary experience.

There are also many possibilities for adventure during the setup and break-down periods of a ticket. The Travellers may have to negotiate with the local authorities to get their personnel out of the drunk-tank or try to find a source for some vital component that has somehow been left behind. The arrival of the mercenary force might be misconstrued by a local faction, triggering completely unexpected events. The mercenaries might be attacked by insurgents and annoyed by protestors, who might be upset at them in particular or something only vaguely related to the ticket.

Overall, a mercenary campaign should not be about dashing from one firefight to the next. Nor should the Travellers be permitted to resolve tickets with a couple of dice rolls, pocketing the fee and moving on. A mercenary campaign is about having adventures, not rushing through missions and collecting loot drops. A ticket, therefore, is a ticket to adventure and should be used as fully as possible by the Referee.

CHAPTER-ONE

USING TICKETS

A ticket is essentially a job offer. It is the beginning of an adventure that might go in an entirely unexpected direction. In most cases the job will be more or less as presented, with a few complications, and can be played out as normal. Some incidents along the way might spark mini-adventures and the situation might well develop far from what the mercenaries might expect after having read the ticket.

Or it might not. The Referee can use tickets in a variety of ways, not all of them invitations to carry out the mission as described. The Travellers might have an adventure on the way to the ticket's specified location and then find the job itself can be resolved with a couple of CEI checks. On other occasions the situation might have changed completely by the time the mercenaries arrive and the adventure might revolve around dealing with this new set of circumstances or just trying to get out alive.

How the Referee uses tickets depends on the type of adventure desired. It would be possible to set out every detail and play through in the manner of a conventional adventure or even to run a skirmish game with miniatures. At the other end of the scale the active parts of the ticket might be abstracted. This should not be commonplace but there are times when the Travellers engage in a routine mission that needs little detail. A ticket might even be used as an adventure hook for something quite different. This might be dealing with an inquiry into what the Travellers' force did during a mission or incidents occurring before, during or after a mission. An adventure might happen to part of the force during the ticket.

The tickets presented in this book are not just situations to be played out; they are intended as examples of how a mercenary ticket can be creatively used by the Referee. The Travellers will not know when they accept the contract exactly what kind of adventure they will have. For this reason, and also for clarity, a standard format is used for all tickets. Even when the ticket is intended to lead to a straight mercenary operation, some details will vary depending on the complexity of the situation. The parts of the ticket intended to be viewed by the Travellers are always presented in the manner described in *Book 2*. The remainder of the information is for the Referee. In some cases it is quite detailed; in others a few lines will suffice.

Note that the four elements of a ticket –Type, Background, Objectives and Details – are presented in text form rather than neat bullet points. This is deliberate; the ticket is what the Travellers see in-game, not a set of game mechanics and criteria. If necessary, game-mechanic information can be placed in the Referee's section of the ticket along with a fuller description of the situation, opposing forces and so forth. The upshot of this is that the Travellers must deduce the precise objectives they need to fulfil in order to have a high Ticket Success Indicator (TSI). Those who learn to do so will generally do better in the mercenary marketplace than those who trundle into action with their brains on standby.

The format is as follows:

Header: This summarises the most important information the Travellers need to decide whether to inquire further.

Description: This section of text – typically no more than three or four paragraphs long – which contains the ticket type, background, objectives and details in a summary form.

Referee's Summary: The remainder of the information is for the Referee only.

Revisiting the example ticket in *Book 2*, these elements are highlighted below:

Striker, Platoon. Cr175000. Success-only.
The ticket header contains enough information for the Travellers to decide if they are interested. The commanders of a battalion-sized unit or one specialising in missions other than Striker, will move on to other contract offers. Those in the right general area can obtain further information.

Decentralised Mineral Extraction Incorporated (DMEI) has small facilities on multiple worlds. Many of these are frontier systems with little effective law enforcement. DMEI personnel have recently begun suffering harassment and even violence from unlicensed competitors who exploit sites already in use by the corporation.

This paragraph is all background. The situation looks legitimate, which may be important to the Travellers. Some mercenary units will take any job if the money is right. Others prefer to be on the 'right' side – or at least to take jobs unlikely to trigger an inquiry or generate a great deal of bad press. Of course there is no guarantee that DMEI is telling the whole truth or even part of the truth, with this information.

DMEI is offering Cr175000 for a platoon-sized unit to make a strike against one of the larger independent facilities. Loss of life is to be kept to a minimum but the facility is to be occupied and its extraction and processing equipment destroyed. The intention is to underline DMEI's legal position that it has exclusive rights to its registered sites and will not tolerate interference or violence towards its personnel.

This paragraph outlines the objectives of the contract without reducing them to TSI points. The Travellers ought to be able to figure out that they must trash the extraction and processing equipment to consider the operation a success. Minimising loss of life is another obvious TSI objective. They may also infer that the reaction of the independents to the operation will be taken as an indicator of success. The Travellers may decide to take actions that underline their client's position, making it more likely this criterion will be met.

The target site is known to be protected by an ad-hoc security contingent numbering around 20 personnel equipped with small arms. Total personnel complement is around 200, of whom an unknown number are armed.

These are details, which may or may not be entirely accurate. If the Travellers have time and want to engage in reconnaissance and intelligence operations they can obtain a much more detailed picture of the likely opposition.

REFEREE'S SUMMARY

The situation is more or less as presented. Appeals have been made to law enforcement agencies to protect the company's rights, and have not produced significant results. The ticket appears (and is) legal and above-board. The Ticket Success Indicator criteria are easy to deduce – take possession of the site, wreck the machines and try not to kill anyone unnecessarily. Although not specified as such, the client is primarily interested in sending a message, and will base the degree of success it perceives by whether the rivals back off, and how much bad publicity arises from the matter. Mercenaries who realise this can tailor their actions towards these unspoken goals and do so without triggering a war between the corporation and its rivals. This is a typical 'corporate strike' mission that is all about business, not conflict.

This is one example of the Referee's information section. In some cases this is all that is needed; in others it will be necessary to specify much more about the situation, the operation and the events that occur during and around it. The Referee's section will often be much longer than the Travellers' part of the ticket and its exact contents can vary enormously.

CHAPTER-TWO

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rather than repeat the same information about the conflicts and situations featured in this book, it is compiled and presented here for the use of the Referee. Some of this data might be publicly available if the Travellers think to look but there is no guarantee that what is in the public databases is free from errors or deliberate falsehoods. Intelligence work by the Travellers – or on their behalf – might uncover more reliable facts.

Some mercenaries simply do not care about the reasons for a conflict or the motivations of those involved. They fight, they get paid, they move on to some other petty squabble. Usually this is sufficient but mercenaries who do not do their homework sometimes get unpleasant surprises. These can include unreliable clients, third parties intent on exploiting the disruption caused by the conflict, insurgencies breaking out in the rear where the mercenaries lightly-guarded base is located, governmental collapse, intervention by a peacekeeping force and all manner of other complications.

THE MERRAIN CONFRONTATION

Merrain is a habitable world with multiple TL7 states that have gradually coalesced into two main power blocs and three smaller ones, with the remaining independent states dominated by the two super-alliances. The Merrain Federation claims to be a planetary government, often referring to those that have not accepted its sovereignty as rebels. It is becoming a single state under this government, with member nations gradually accepting more and more unifying measures. Unfortunately, the Federation seems to have fallen for its own propaganda and has gone from wooing other states to join its governmental framework to coercing them with economic warfare or outright conquest. It is in the process of becoming a very nasty organisation whilst retaining its democratic nature. The majority of the population support the unification of their world and have been induced by years of propaganda to view the 'rebels' as a threat to peace and stability.

The primary opponent of the Merrain Federation is a much looser alliance formed mainly out of fear of the Federation's growing military power. Styling itself the Lennent Treaty States, or LTS, this alliance suffers from internal divisions and an inability to form a coherent strategy. Whichever of the member states feels most threatened tends to push for action, whilst the others attend to their own concerns.

The other three powers are the Shelter Islands Alliance, the League of Eder and the Minnent. Minnent is the name of one of the world's great rivers and has become the title of a league of three small states in its drainage basin. The Minnent is primarily an economic alliance, whose forces are small and equipped mainly for internal security. Thus far it has been little troubled by the clashes elsewhere but it is only a matter of time before its three small states become part of the Merrain Federation… one way or another.

The League of Eder has at times been an ally of the Merrain Federation and the Lennent Treaty States but usually tries to play them off against one another. It is the oldest alliance on Merrain and seems stable. Its armed forces have a long tradition of working well together, to the point where the much larger LTS is an easier target for conquest.

The Shelter Islands are distant from the mainland states and generally untroubled by the situation there. An alliance of minor states, their involvement in the situation to date has been little more than a token security presence to protect maritime shipping assets.

Conflict between the major alliances would be very bloody and neither seems willing to commit to war. Instead a 'cold war' situation exists in which mercenaries are used as deniable assets to harass or disrupt the activities of the opposition. The Merrain Federation has undertaken wars of conquest against smaller states, usually on the pretext of dealing with a threat or responding to aggression. The pattern of vilifying the next target with propaganda and provoking a war that can be easily won is well established but in recent years the LTS states have begun supporting the likely victims with economic measures and toughening them with mercenary forces. This proxy defence is expensive, however, and tends to proceed in fits and starts.

PORT REIKIR

Port Reikir is a corporate-run spaceport functioning as an independent city-state. It has a modest TL12 industrial base that dominates the planetary economy by producing goods the local TL8 economy cannot rival. To do so the port's owning consortium brings in large quantities of raw materials from offworld, buying locally only when necessary. The world government sees Port Reikir as an economic threat, diverting revenue that would otherwise be generated by local businesses.

The world's actual starport is a rather modest affair built by the world government to TL8 standards and cannot compete in terms of efficiency or comfort with Port Reikir. As a result Reikir has drawn off most of the shipping coming in and out of the world, further reducing the revenue available to the world government. An attempt has been made to upgrade the port but it remains a poor second to the well-appointed facilities at Reikir.

Port Reikir has its own problems, however. It is constructed on an artificial island in the delta of a major river, the Gughter, and connected to the mainland by a pair of long bridges/causeways. Beyond the delta, the major rail and road links run through a cleared area of what used to be rainforest and the forest apparently objects to remaining cleared. Work is constantly needed to keep the links open and there are those who favour abandoning them entirely. Most of the planetside traffic into the port comes in by sea,and grav vehicles are available to maintain overland links, if necessary.

The shipping channel through the delta was once a natural deep-water passage but the constant shifting of sediment has moved the navigable channel several kilometres. Regular dredging is necessary to allow large maritime vessels to enter the docks at Port Reikir. These are common, taking goods to market in the cities of the world, but often arrive empty. The change in displacement caused by loading has caused the occasional freighter to ground itself in the channel, requiring a refloating operation before the port can continue to operate.

Much of the activity at Port Reikir consists of goods arriving by starship, offloading into warehouses serving the port's factories and eventually being transformed into consumer goods which are shipped out by sea. The port is obviously wealthy, in contrast to the seaports its goods travel to. These are mostly in decline, except where the Reikir consortium has invested in improvements. In turn this has created an increasing stake in local maritime trade. The planet's government is deeply unhappy about the situation and there are activist groups determined to 'stop Reikir buying our planet'. Some of these groups have made threats or carried out acts of violence against the port and its personnel, and the government does not seem inclined to act against them.

THE WAR ON WAR

The 'Cease Warmongering!' movement, often known as 'CW!', began as a peaceful opposition to the 'warmongering' of planetary governments. Whether or not the conflicts were justified or, as CW! claimed, they were the product of egotistical politicians and greedy corporations is a matter of opinion. What is known is that the CW! movement changed in character over time and eventually became a violent insurgency. This happened by way of the 'war on war' declared by CW!'s leaders. Their stated intent was to disrupt all military operations and preparations by peaceful means. Typically this was limited to protesting outside government buildings and military bases, at least in the beginning.

Perhaps inevitably, but certainly ironically, the 'war on war' escalated into violence. Protests continued but sabotage of military and government vehicles eventually led to loss of life. The more radical members of CW! began to attack corporations involved in arms manufacture or related industries. Soft targets like corporate personnel were favoured over trying to attack military facilities, drawing an ever harsher response from the authorities.

CW! was declared an illegal organisation on multiple worlds and most of its adherents began distancing themselves from it. What was left was a hard core of activists and militants, some of whom were willing to resist attempts to arrest their leaders. Once the shooting started, it escalated rapidly and soon an active insurgency had broken out on several worlds. The original intent of the organisation was forgotten long ago. Rather than opposing warmongering, CW! now fights to bring down the governments that have offended it. One aspect of the organisation's original moral stance has resurfaced, however. Terrorism is unacceptable to CW!, to the point where those who go too far may be handed over to the authorities. Whether this is to gain public sympathy or a genuine ethical stance is unclear.

The insurgency has grown large, although communications between its branches on various worlds remain intermittent. In urban areas the usual methods involve emplaced bombs, snipers and raids on governmental installations. These are carried out with great restraint and indiscriminate killings are considered unacceptable. Indeed, the organisation has at times informed the authorities about its own emplaced explosives, throwing away all preparation for an operation in order to avoid civilian casualties. Again, it is not clear if this is a propaganda gambit or not.

In rural areas, the insurgency operates as a large and poorly equipped militia. It is capable of taking over a region for a time and has made itself popular by destroying government facilities such as tax offices and police stations without harming anyone. Whilst the peaceful origins of the movement have been long forgotten, its antipathy for the governments it was formed to oppose is stronger than ever and it has become a direct threat to their existence. Despite being a violent insurgency, which causes a great deal of damage and disruption to the lives of ordinary people, CW! continues to garner support among the population. Each clash with government forces is portrayed as yet another example of the sort of warmongering the organisation was created to stop. Far from winding down, the 'war on war' continues to escalate and may eventually explode into full-scale civil war.

UNITED VS DIVERSIFIED

Many years ago, Suntori Heavy Industries was a medium-sized business group operating in the heavy industry sector. It operated small shipyards, mining installations and alloy-making facilities on a number of worlds. The firm expanded quickly during a boom period and moved into other sectors. A series of mergers and buyouts turned the firm into a diversified corporation operating under the name The Suntori Group. When the boom ended, The Suntori Group found itself in financial trouble and attempted to divest itself of the worst loss-making assets.

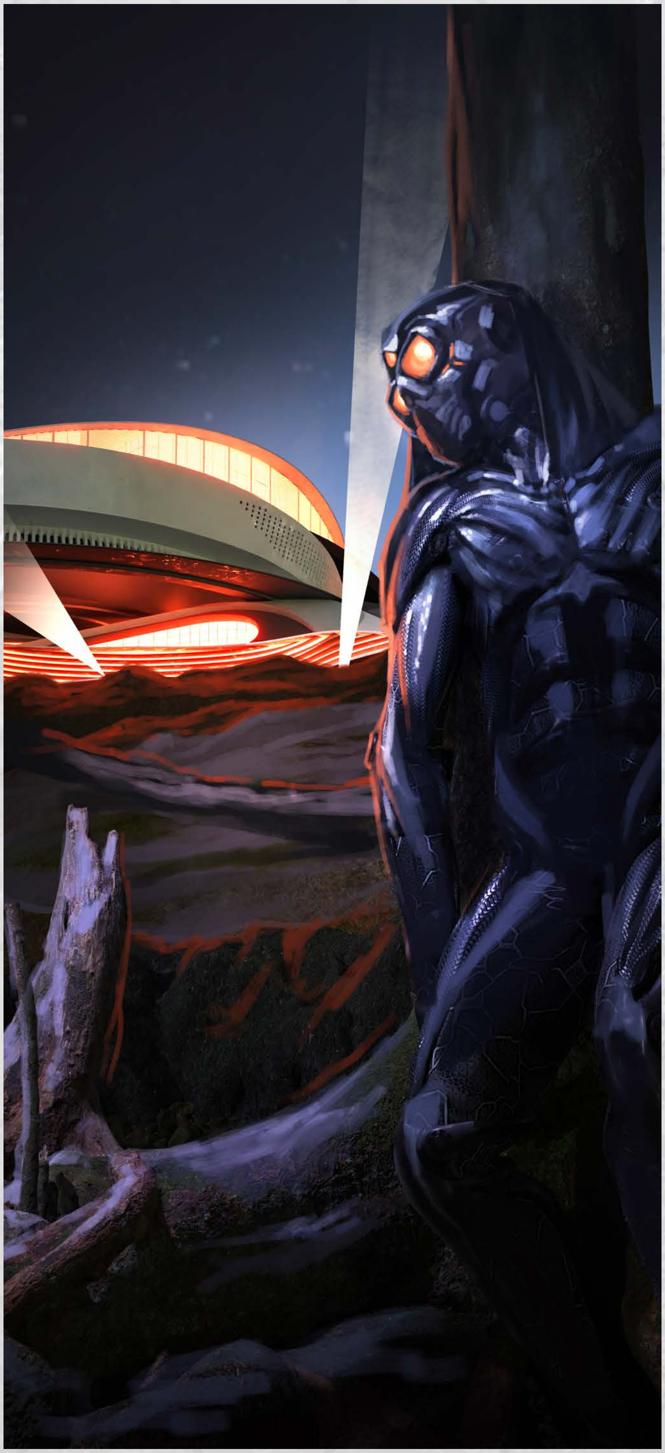
A hurried restructuring created two firms, both claiming ownership of the Suntori name and of some facilities and licenses. Suntori Unified returned to the firm's original areas of activity and consolidated its holdings, whilst Suntori Diversified made a risky grab for a wide range of assets. Both are now stable and capable of expansion, which has resulted in friction. Disputes over ownership of everything from the company name to its assets on remote worlds began as legal bids but have recently spilled over into small-scale mercenary operations.

To further complicate the situation, some assets were nationalised by local governments in a questionable manner. Attempts to regain control of these assets or at least to obtain a fair buyout, have largely been ignored. Both Suntori groups claim ownership of these assets, and have launched mercenary operations to recapture them or remove their valuable equipment. Mostly these operations have been aimed at outsiders but upon occasion the two firms have clashed directly. Suntori Unified particularly resents any intrusion into its core market sector and has attempted to claim any Suntori assets operating in this field must belong to it. Diversified rejects this position and has expanded its security element in case it needs to prove the point. It seems likely that a full-scale trade war will break out in the near future.

CHAPTER-THREE

TEAM OR SECTION TICKETS

The following tickets are intended for a small group of mercenaries, typically no more than a section-equivalent. Such small groups are often informally organised and referred to as teams rather than by a military unit designation.



HOT RECOVERY

Commando, Section. Cr75000. Success-only.

The Breulen Mansion is one of several residences owned by the extremely wealthy Hansenger family. It is only used intermittently, when a family member is on-planet. The rest of the time it is maintained by a small caretaker staff and a handful of guards. It has long been suspected that the Hansengers have ties to organised crime operating on an interstellar scale but evidence is hard to come by. A rival, who does not wish to be identified, has become aware that the mansion contains a secure, physically isolated computer system used to store data on the family's illicit dealings.

The rival is offering Cr75,000 for a small team of mercenaries to enter the mansion by whatever means necessary, locate the data storage and obtain copies of the contents. The operation is entirely illegal but the mansion is located in a remote area so local law enforcement personnel are unlikely to arrive within an hour even if alerted. The client is not unduly worried about damage to the mansion or harm coming to its occupants but wishes to avoid any entanglements with law enforcement and would prefer to keep the operation as low-profile as possible.

The mansion officially has a small private security detail, equipped with sidearms and civilian weapons. It is presumed that, given the sensitive nature of the facility, the security force is actually larger and better-armed than outward appearances indicate.

Referee's Summary

The situation is more or less as presented. The mansion is located in a huge estate with difficult terrain in most directions – steep hillsides and thick forests for the most part. There is a single road in and out, used mainly for deliveries as the mansion is well equipped with grav vehicles. Automated sensors are emplaced throughout the estate. These are of a commercially available type, constructed at TL10, and relatively easy for a military force to spoof or disable once detected. The Travellers will need to get in and out without coming into contact with local law enforcement personnel.

Approaching the Mansion

There are three potential approaches to the mansion, and possibly others if the Travellers are creative. Infiltrating on foot through the forest is entirely possible but will take time and require patience. If the Travellers choose this option they will need to consider exfiltration from a hot situation. A long hike through the forest with security gunmen, and possibly law enforcement agents looking for them, is unlikely to be a good idea – although very stealthy Travellers could pull it off. Extraction by grav vehicle after the mission has gone 'loud' is a better option. Indeed, this is a standard model for mercenary operations; slow and quiet infiltration, extreme noise and violence, then a fast exfil. There will be pursuit of course but the Travellers may be able to break contact and disappear.

Ground vehicles must use the road, which is watched. Deception might work, with the Travellers pretending to be delivering something. There is nothing else on the road, so claims to be on the way to a holiday village for some outdoorsy recreation will fall flat. The Referee should keep in mind that the owners of the mansion are ruthless criminals. They are quite willing to have their security force riddle a vehicle with bullets and hide the wreckage, without any warning whatsoever. Using the road poses the additional problem that the attack will trigger intervention by a law enforcement response unit, which will be coming the other way and expecting trouble. The Travellers are unlikely to be able to bluff their way past alerted law enforcement agents.

The most effective approach is also the simplest; dash in using a grav vehicle and use it to escape afterwards. The vehicle might draw off and lay low somewhere during the operation, since leaving it parked on the lawn invites destruction or capture. A low-flying grav vehicle is unlikely to be spotted by guards if its pilot makes use of terrain cover until the final approach. This means the guards will have only seconds to react – providing they have not detected the vehicle on their sensors. Such is the nature of the target that its defenders will be instantly alerted and prepared for violence if they detect an intruding vehicle. They know an attack is possible and are prepared for it but can still be caught by surprise.

The client did not tell the mercenaries about emplaced sensors, for the very good reason that their presence is unknown. It is logical that there would be some form of remote detection system in place but if the Travellers fail to think of it they will have to deal with the consequences. Planning ahead and foreseeing problems is an essential part of mercenary operations.

If the mercenaries do not do something about the sensors they will definitely be detected on approach, probably whilst they are still a few minutes out if approaching by grav vehicle. This will permit the security personnel to arm up and take positions. If the Travellers are on foot the guards will have hours to prepare and may set up an ambush. Surprise, garnered either by disabling the sensors and coming in fast or by some form of deception, will find the outer guards equipped only with their sidearms. The Hansenger family maintain the facade of being respectable wealthy people as much as possible and keep security arrangements inconsistent with this poise out of the public eye.

The Security Detail

The mansion's security force is 12 strong, including some of the 'caretaker' staff who are actually guards. The force has access to military grade body armour and small arms but is a group of gunmen rather than an organised military force. They will fight hard but probably in an uncoordinated fashion. If the situation is to be resolved in a force-versus force manner using the rules in *Book 1*, the following characteristics apply.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Breulen Mansion Security Detail	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	3	-1
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	10	+1

If combats are to be run using the standard *Traveller* rules the security force's CEI gives an indication of skill levels in primary and secondary areas; in this case 2+1/1+1. This means any given security detachment member will have a skill level of 2 in one key area – probably Gun Combat – and 1 in another key area such as Recon or Electronics (sensors). They will also have two skills at level 1 in related or secondary fields such as Medic, Persuade, Recon or Stealth.

Guards caught with just their sidearms will try to retreat into the mansion and get to the concealed arms lockers. There will always be a couple of guards close to the lockers who can grab their weapons instantly and don body armour quickly. Weaponry in use is up to the Referee but likely to include submachineguns, combat shotguns, assault rifles or advanced combat rifles. There are also a couple of powerful long-range rifles and the security force may even have an anti-materiel rifle for use against light vehicles.

Tactically, the security detachment will prefer to seal the building and rely on its toughened doors and windows to keep attackers out. Windows can withstand a few hits from gunfire but will eventually break. Doors are electronically dead-bolted and extremely tough but can be battered down or riddled with gunfire until they fail. The Travellers should have considered how they would make entry to the mansion before they arrived; if not, they will have to improvise.

The security detail will hit their panic button, summoning local law enforcement to their aid. The first elements will take an hour or so to arrive and consist of whatever patrol units are nearby. The local equivalent of a SWAT team will follow but will take 90–120 minutes to reach the mansion. Law enforcement personnel use ground vehicles and do not normally operate in the countryside. They do not think like soldiers, although the SWAT team may come close and may run into an ambush that a military force would detect. Attacking the police is not a good idea but the Travellers will have advantages if they do.

The defenders will try to buy time for this to happen rather than battling mercenaries head-on – although they are willing to do that if they must. Law enforcement will not be automatically alerted by the sensor system as the Hansenger family does not want police at its estate if this can be avoided. If the defenders detect the approaching mercenaries they will decide whether to hunker down or stage an ambush depending on the perceived level of threat.

A well-executed approach will see the mercenaries on the ground and possibly inside the building before the defenders can seal it. They will encounter light resistance from poorly armed gunmen and sweep them aside before having to deal with a handful who have armed up properly. The mission in this case will be a bit like being hit by a train and the mercenaries may be surprised at how easy it was. On the other hand, if they are detected on approach, or faff about and give the defenders time to respond, they could be in trouble.

The security detail will use rifles to snipe from rooftops or upper windows whilst greeting any attempt to break through a door or window with a hail of automatic gunfire. They might have to explain to the local police afterward, but they will do what they must right now and worry about consequences later. The owners of the mansion have cultivated a close relationship with local officials and can smooth over any little issues like why the Travellers' air/raft was disabled by a 15mm anti-materiel rifle which has now mysteriously disappeared.

Executing the Mission

The computer facility is buried in a deep concealed basement. The mercenaries will have to search carefully or persuade one of the guards to reveal its location. Not all of them know. Some truly believe they are simply guarding a rich family's property, albeit one with better security than local laws permit.

Once inside the house, there is surprisingly little security other than combination locks on some internal doors. These are easily disabled electronically and the doors themselves can be opened with a Mk1 combat boot. The mercenaries may be under time pressure and could face complications such as holdouts from among the security detail or ‘harmless’ gardeners and housekeepers suddenly opening up with military-grade firepower.

If the entrance to the concealed basement can be located, the computer itself has reasonable access security but was never intended to resist a hacking attempt. It is defended by anonymity, physical isolation and a lot of automatic weapons; the owners did not envisage anyone gaining access to their computer room and have become complacent about cyber security.

The volume of data is such that it will take 30 minutes or so to copy it all. Local law enforcement may or may not have been alerted, depending on whether the Travellers disabled the mansion’s communications system or overran the guards before they could call for help. Once the data is downloaded the Travellers will have to exfiltrate. They may be ambushed by holdouts if they are careless and could run into police vehicles coming up the road to the mansion. There will be a search or pursuit if the police are altered but a rapid exfiltration followed by going to ground should take the Travellers clear of any response.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket uses standard fivefold criteria. These are as follows:

1: CRITICAL: Extract a significant volume of data from the hidden computer facility.
2: IMPORTANT: Avoid causing casualties among local law enforcement personnel.
3: ROUTINE: Exfiltrate from the mission site without being tracked.
4: ROUTINE: Do not cause wanton destruction in the mansion.
5: ROUTINE: Do not take any serious or fatal casualties.

The values for Ticket Success Criteria are found on page 37 of *Book 2*. With one Critical, one Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI score for completing all these objectives is 13. The mission will be considered a success of sorts – enough to pay the fee – by the client if the Important criterion is met with Complete or Partial success. TSI can be used to determine the overall degree of success attributed to the mission. See page 43 of *Book 1*.

ADMINISTERING HOT RECOVERY

A ticket is subject to considerable Referee interpretation and must be tailored to the situation. The mission fee, for example, assumes a section-sized force with small overheads. Commando mission fees are based on six months’ salaries for a standard sized force, often with an increment for hazard. The actual mission will take no more than a couple of hours, more than likely, and even with a day or two of preparation there is a good margin of profit in this mission. However, this assumes the mercenaries are already on-planet. If they have to travel to the target world, paying salaries as they go, the mission fee will be quickly eaten up. In this situation the Referee may assume the client is willing to cover salaries whilst the force is en route. The default position is that the client does not do this but that assumes a fairly large force on a longish deployment. For short tickets like this one, it is not unreasonable for the mercenaries to ask the client to cover expenses.

The Referee must decide how this ticket is going to be played out and prepare accordingly. It could be played using the standard Traveller rules, or as a skirmish game. Alternatively it might be resolved in an abstract manner. It is not always necessary to determine CBAS characteristics, CEI and so forth for the opposition, or to create statistics for the personnel involved, but the Referee must be prepared for the sort of game they intend to run.

However the mission is played out, TSI must be determined. As a success-only ticket this one has a Critical criterion, which must be met at least partially for the client to be willing to pay. The details of the TSI criteria were not spelled out to the mercenaries but can be inferred from the mission brief. Overall, a successful mission is one in which the mercenaries get in and out fast with the data and keep the level of destruction to a minimum. The client does not much care about this, and might actually like seeing a bitter rival’s home being trashed, but they do not want to draw the attention of law enforcement agencies or the media to any greater degree than necessary.

NEW SHERRIFF IN TOWN

Security, Section. Cr25000 plus full support. Bonus possible.

Lamika Municipal Spaceport (LMS) is a typical secondary facility, serving a cluster of cities far from the main starport. Its budget is small, since volume of traffic is low, and security in particular is underfunded. This has not been a problem until recently but a series of incidents has resulted in the port gaining a reputation for lawlessness.

LMS Port Authority is offering Cr25000 plus full 'fat ticket' support including 100% coverage of salaries for a section or equivalent of mercenaries with urban security experience. Full support includes accommodation at the port, use of vehicles and other facilities as needed. The force will provide an armed deterrent to crime and actively operate against lawless elements within and around the port.

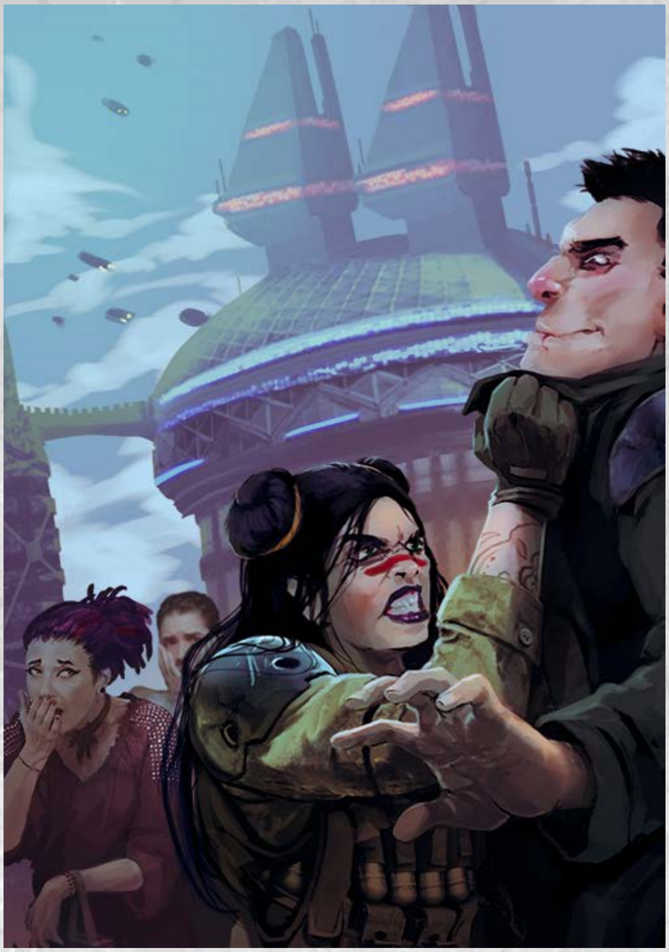
No significant opposition is expected. Most incidents will be of an armed-arrest nature with the possibility of occasional escalation.

Referee's Information

The situation at the port is rather worse than advertised, although overall the client has been truthful. What has happened is that the weak and poorly led security detachment at the port, numbering 12 low-quality guards, has become defensive and risk-averse. Patrols are limited to certain areas of the port such as the landing field and main concourse, with most other areas ignored. Visitors straying into one of these no-enforcement zones risk being robbed, or worse, and the security force lacks the will or the resources to investigate.

Arriving at the Port

The Travellers will be unwelcome from the moment they arrive at the port. Nobody trusts them and the security force sees them as both a threat and a reminder of its own inadequacy. The mercenaries will meet with passive resistance or apathetic lack of cooperation, making their initial operations particularly difficult. Little information is volunteered, even by those who should be providing it, and answers to questions are often vague or defensive. The Travellers may start to wonder if the local security force or port authority is in the pocket of a crime ring or similar organisation but the truth of the matter is that they are simply unwilling to show outsiders just how badly they have been performing.



The accommodation assigned to the Travellers is entirely adequate – they will more than likely be put in a local hotel – but it is anything but 'military'. Security for stowed equipment is lacking and the mercenaries may have to perform maintenance in a loading bay or even the front lobby, to the mortification of hotel staff. Thievery is likely if the Travellers leave valuable hardware lying about and if they are really careless some of their weaponry might turn up on the local black market or in the hands of their opposition.

A short period of orientation is advisable after arriving at the port and will allow some first-hand information to be gathered. This will indicate the real situation if the Travellers are diligent, highlighting the inadequacy of the security force and the lawlessness of much of the port. It should be possible to infer from reports of thefts and robberies which areas are really dangerous and which are merely inhabited by low-level criminals. Good intelligence-gathering work at this point might prevent the Travellers from blundering into a lethal situation or unloading hundreds of rounds at a couple of unarmed pickpockets.

Carrying out the Mission

How the Travellers proceed is very much up to them. As usual, planning is critical and the Referee may need to highlight this. Some Travellers have a tendency to expect the adventure to happen to them rather than driving events forward. This approach leads to rather limp adventures at the best of times but in the case of a mercenary operation it is a straight road to failure. In this case, failure will not be too deadly. Wandering around with brains in neutral waiting for something to happen can lead to being attacked at a time and place of the enemy's choosing, with rather bad results. This could happen here but it is more likely the Travellers will simply fail to make any real difference.

The Travellers will need to carry out patrols of the port but this will not be enough on its own. They may pick up minor criminals and deter others from acting in the areas the Travellers can reach but 'fire brigade' policing is not going to crack the major gangs. The mercenaries are unlikely to face much opposition if they are carrying military weapons and arrests made at gunpoint will be relatively easy. The dangerous gangs could resist the Travellers but they have no real need to. They are better off keeping their distance and hoping the Travellers will eventually fall into the same pattern as the existing security force. The only reason the gangs will seek a confrontation is if they feel the need to strike before the Travellers do or if they have an opportunity to eliminate the mercenary force in a badly secured base.

The Travellers will also notice that over time attitudes harden towards them. Eventually small protests begin, branding the mercenaries as heavy-handed thugs and demanding their withdrawal. If the Travellers think to investigate they will discover that someone is running a propaganda campaign, amplifying anything questionable and inventing reasons to want rid of the mercenaries. This will escalate if permitted to continue, until the mercenaries start being pelted with trash or confronted by ostentatiously unarmed but angry people. These provocations are rather unwise but there are always people self-righteous enough to think they can get away with this sort of thing. It may be that they can, since gunning down unarmed people in the street is likely to result in termination of contract and investigation by a more competent branch of the local authorities.

The propaganda campaign can be countered by a 'hearts and minds' effort based around success in reducing the level of crime in the port. It may also be possible to find out who is leading the campaign with some intelligence work and to shut them down. A thorough investigation will reveal that there is no high-level organised crime within the port but there are several associations of criminals who find the situation useful. The port's brokers benefit from smuggling and cargo misappropriation, shipping illicit goods on behalf of local criminals or selling to them. It is not a grand conspiracy as such, more an evolved way of doing things that has replaced regulated business with grift and occasional robbery.

Dealing with the Crime Gangs

The crime gangs do not want anyone poking around in their parts of the port and consider robbing anyone who ventures there a perk of 'ownership'. They are also prone to intimidate or take reprisals against anyone who opposes them or provides information to those who do. This makes concrete information on the gangs hard to come by. However, it is not difficult to figure out where their territory lies. A map of where the port's security force does not like to go reveals several areas likely to contain gang territory.

There are several gangs, most of which are small associations of half a dozen individuals that sometimes cooperate to mutual advantage. They have had it easy for a long time and are complacent. Even a ham-fisted lunge into a 'no-go area' in the hope of blundering into some suspects can work. If the Travellers make the slightest effort they can figure out numbers and locations, and there is little a handful of individuals with handguns and knives can do when heavily armed mercenaries come calling. If someone does go for a gun there may be violence but the gangs are more likely to flee than fight. Good, or even mediocre, planning will enable the Travellers to net a few bad guys. They will be removed from the port area for trial and are not the Travellers' problem once handed over.

However, once the Travellers start to become a real threat the crime gangs will sit up and take notice. Their first attempt to get rid of the Travellers is the propaganda campaign but once it becomes apparent this is not going to work they will take direct measures. Unfortunately for them, they are amateurs who do not really understand how dangerous professionals can be. One of the larger gangs will attempt an ambush, which could work if the Travellers are complacent. If they are alert or well-informed – perhaps as a result of winning some of the local population over – the Travellers may even be able to turn the tables on the attackers, catching them as they move into ambush positions and making mass arrests or eliminations.

The gangs at first try to fight for their turf against the Travellers as they would do against one another and should be outmatched by the mercenaries. Whilst not a pushover, a band of armed criminals is not likely to be a serious threat to a mercenary force. Eventually, some of the gangs will form an alliance and try to take out the Travellers directly. This might be by way of an attack on their base if they have not taken measures to secure it, or might result in running battles through the more dangerous parts of the port.

The crime gangs are not military forces but can be modelled using the same characteristics.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Lamika Municipal Starport Criminals	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Infantry	–3
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	3	–2

Individuals are likely to be armed with a handgun or melee weapon, although the more dangerous gangs have access to submachineguns and similar urban combat weapons. Support equipment such as communication gear is limited to civilian personal comms and the like and organisation is informal even in more competent gangs.

Gaining Control

Ultimately the Travellers will need to hand back the port to its security contingent, which means rebuilding it into a force capable of decisive action. Direct confrontation will cause resentment and although the security force can be bullied back to work the mercenaries will achieve better results by coaxing the locals. One option is to ask a couple of them to tag along with patrols as 'backup' or 'to provide local knowledge'. Participating in effective operations will build confidence and remind the security personnel of what they used to be.

If the Travellers handle this situation well they may be able to inspire the local security force to consolidate areas cleared of criminals and gain support of the local population. Driving off the criminals is useful but without such consolidation they will only come back. To create a lasting legacy the mercenaries will need to do more than fight their enemies; they will have to win over the population and restore a culture that demands proper law enforcement. This can be modelled by a 'hearts and minds' type campaign if required but well-thought-out actions on the part of the Travellers should be rewarded with a positive outcome.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

1: IMPORTANT: Drive off or arrest the criminal gangs.
2: IMPORTANT: Do not cause casualties among local civilians or law enforcement personnel.
3: ROUTINE: Shut down the propaganda effort.
4: ROUTINE: Restore confidence among the local security force.
5: ROUTINE: Keep use of lethal force to a minimum.

With two Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 12. The client will pay the unit's fee regardless of success or failure providing the mercenaries made a credible effort.

ADMINISTERING NEW SHERRIFF IN TOWN

This ticket takes place over a month, with the Travellers gradually learning more about the situation in the port. Intelligence work can be interspersed with routine encounters and patrols, with arrests of criminals who are disinclined to shoot it out with the mercenaries. The situation will gradually escalate, with a ham-fisted attempt to take out the mercenaries leading to an any-means-necessary clearance of the criminals' home areas. In order to fully restore order the mercenaries will need to motivate the security force and win over the local population to at least some extent.

TEAM-BUILDING

Cadre, Section. Cr25000 per month plus bonus.
Emilio Durant is a successful wine merchant, specialising in rare and expensive vintages. He has built his business up from a single small shop to a multiworld import/export business and now employs hundreds of staff. Under his insightful leadership, Durant Wines and Spirits has become a market leader renowned for quality. The company has exclusive contracts with heads of state and captains of industry, and is a household name in the field. This is in part due to the care with which Durant Wines and Spirits develops its staff and helps them achieve excellence.

Durant Wines and Spirits is offering Cr25000 plus bonuses for a small team of security experts to lead a team-building exercise for the firm's latest intake of fast-track management candidates. These exercises are always innovative and challenging, and this time the theme is military. The mercenaries will protect the candidates and mentor them in combat and survival skills, increasing their confidence and ability to withstand the sometimes brutal environment in which interstellar-class businesses operate.

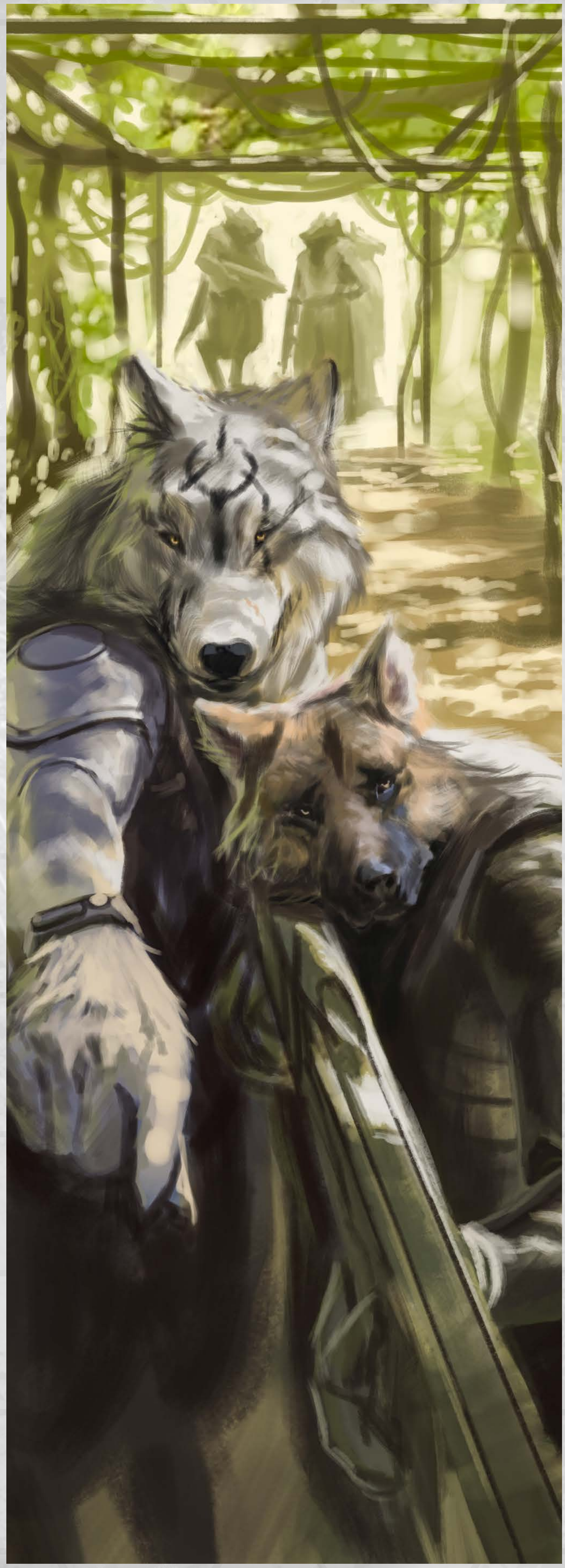
The mercenaries will provide challenging experiences for the candidates, including live-fire weapons training. No combat is expected.

Referee's Information

The tone of the ticket might give the Travellers some warning about what they are letting themselves in for. They will be dealing with a group of about 20 young corporate go-getters who 'know' that the life of a professional soldier is not nearly so challenging as surviving in the boardroom. They will be expected to devise a set of team-building challenges to take place over two weeks in the 'wilderness' a few kilometres from the nearest city.

The Field Trip

The client will provide camping equipment, which turns out to be the most luxurious high-end palace-tents imaginable and all the supporting resources. This includes a chef to cook for the executives-to-be and about a dozen runners to see to their every whim. The candidates vary in enthusiasm for the exercise. Some complain incessantly about the awful conditions whilst others are gung-ho for everything in the hope that their enthusiasm will be noticed. They know they have to pass the mercenaries' challenges to remain in the fast-track management programme. Some will try to sleaze their way through, others make a reasonable go of it. What they all have in common is a complete lack of aptitude for most of what they have to do.



It should not be hard to devise suitable activities. Getting a heavy object to some other place with nothing but muscle power is a favourite in this situation, as are escape and evasion challenges. Keeping themselves from strangling the candidates is more of a problem but if they can do so the mercenaries will receive a bonus of another Cr25000 for what is pretty easy work. This is payable if the client is satisfied the mercenaries did indeed challenge the candidates and make them learn about themselves.

This part of the ticket is characterised by interpersonal problem-solving. The candidates are exceptionally annoying and simply do not understand the difference between their world and that of a professional soldier. Most of them 'know' they are better than mere thugs-for-hire and will manifest it in various ways. Some will try to bribe or browbeat the mercenaries into letting them bypass challenges they do not want to take part in. Others will try to humiliate the mercenaries, perhaps by inviting them to enjoy dinner and wine then making pointed comments about their lack of finesse – and in some cases the executive-to-be will genuinely think the mercenaries do not understand they are being made fun of. On the other hand, some of the candidates will think the mercenaries are cool or sexy and genuinely want to spend time with them.

The mercenaries will have to deal with all this but other than the behaviour and general annoying-ness of the candidates, nothing much goes awry for the first few days. Inevitably, the over-enthusiasm of the most determined candidates proves to be their undoing. Cleverly circumventing an obstacle in a manner that wiser or less pushy individuals would have not attempted, some of the candidates get themselves into a predicament. Its exact nature depends on what challenges the Travellers have set. It might be an accidental gunshot injury, a fall into a ravine or some similar hazard.

Rescuing the Executives

The Travellers will have to set up a rescue. Depending on the circumstances of the disaster this could be quite tricky or time-sensitive. They could probably do it better themselves but if they involve the candidates the mercenaries have a chance to make this a graduation exercise. If they do not involve the candidates but do not think of giving them something to do in order to get them out of the way, the Travellers will have to contend with corporate go-getters trying to show how resourceful they are by finding ways to help. The resulting chaos may make the Travellers wish for a nice, straightforward firefight.

It is extremely unlikely any of this will lead to combat. The mercenaries might be able to fulfil the needs of the brief in a way that impresses the client, although this will require selling what they have done in a post-mission debrief. The client will want to know which candidates performed well and who did not, ideally in the sort of terms that can be used by a corporate personnel department to justify promotions or firings. The Travellers might find it distasteful to have to present their feedback in such terms when they would like to be a lot more blunt but equally they could have some fun presenting damning criticism in bland, corporate terms.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

1: IMPORTANT: Provide challenging and interesting things for the candidates to do.
2: IMPORTANT: Do not over-react to the annoyances caused by the candidates.
3: ROUTINE: Rescue the idiots from their own stupidity.
4: ROUTINE: Involve the remaining candidates in the rescue or keep them out of the way.
5: ROUTINE: Provide positive feedback to the candidates in a suitably 'corporate' manner.

With two Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 12. The bonus is payable if the overall mission is a success and will be doubled if the Travellers sell the idea that a self-inflicted disaster is somehow an opportunity for growth and self-knowledge. They might think otherwise but the client is impressed by this sort of thing.

ADMINISTERING TEAM-BUILDING

This ticket is intended as a change of pace in what might otherwise be an unrelenting violent campaign. There are problems to solve and opportunities for black humour... and in the end it is all money in the bank.

KNOCKING ON DOORS

Striker, Section. Cr75000 plus bonus.

Suntori Diversified recently acquired a small orbital installation in the outsystem, which serves as a central spaceport for industries such as asteroid mining. However, far from being a going concern the port is crippled by lawlessness and intimidation, and spacers prefer to go elsewhere even if it means an in-system transit of several days. The new owners are in firm control of the main docks and administrative area but facing resistance from armed gangs who demand a percentage of the port's revenue in return for not disrupting its function.

Suntori Diversified is offering Cr75000 for a small force to eliminate the gangs. The force will be brought onto the station as 'additional workers' and only key staff will know their true purpose. The mercenaries can bring whatever weapons and equipment they have and use them at their discretion. Suntori Diversified would prefer lawful arrests but has lost patience over the matter. The mercenary force is clear to engage any threat it encounters.

The gangs are mostly armed with civilian weapons but may have light automatics or laser weaponry. Resistance is to be expected but likely disorganised.

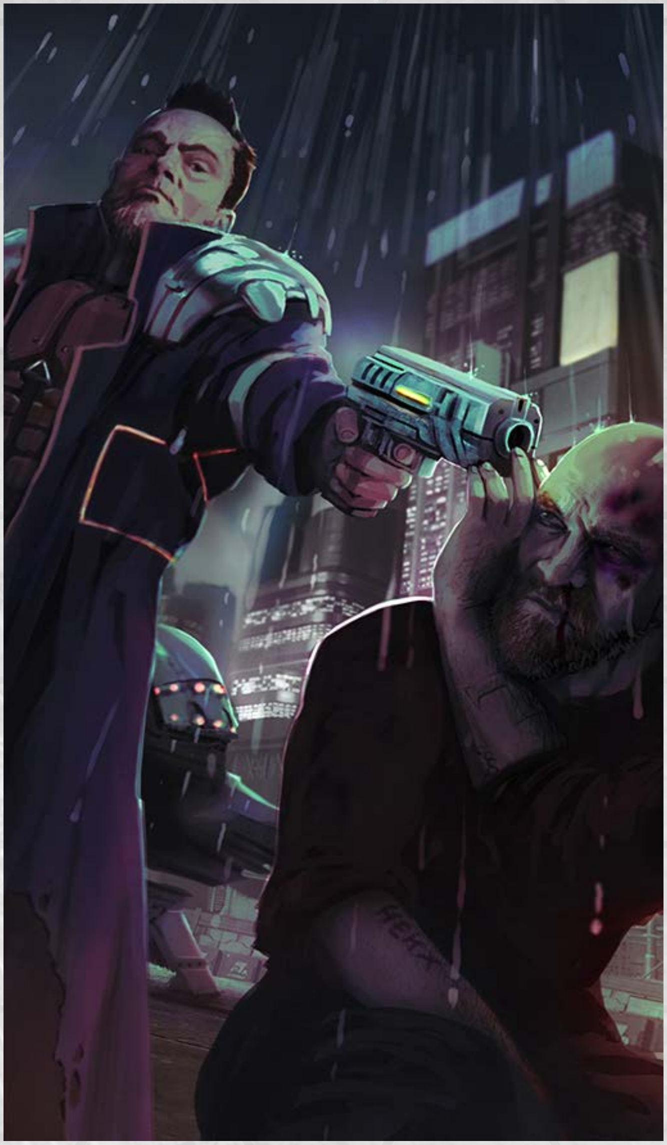
Referee's Information

The port is a fair size, capable of housing 20,000 people and some modest industry. Much of it is derelict or abandoned, although life-support still functions. These areas could be reclaimed if the gangs are removed and if so the port might become a useful asset. At present it is a money pit and Suntori Diversified wants the situation turned around fast.

The clean-up is expected to be short and violent, with raids on the gangs' territory conducted in rapid succession. Dead or in custody is fine, so long as the gangs are shut down. The company will ignore almost any level of excessive force – as far as it is concerned it is at war and will do what is necessary.

Deploying

The mercenaries are expected to spend a few days familiarising themselves with the station and its occupants but after that they will be under pressure to get down to business. The cover story that the Travellers are 'additional staff' will not bear much scrutiny but if the Travellers are discreet nobody will be taking much notice of them at first. They might even spread some disinformation, perhaps letting slip that they are some kind of corporate troubleshooters investigating Suntori's officials ahead of a round of dismissals. A story along those lines will convince most people they want to stay out of the way and should deflect suspicion for a while.



The Travellers will have to decide how to bring their weaponry and military equipment in and how it is to be stored. A few personal weapons should be easy enough to smuggle, although the mercenaries might have to deceive the installation's security personnel. If this fails they can present their authorisation and just bring in whatever they like but their targets will be alerted.

Wise Travellers will undertake some intelligence work before commencing operations. If they do not, they will have to rely on information presented by the client. This is broadly accurate but was compiled by a corporate body rather than an intelligence staff serving a military unit. The level of opposition is much as predicted, with one exception. The gangs have informers within the port staff. If the Travellers conceal their intentions their first raid will be a total surprise – the gangs are not diligent intelligence officers, just criminals who like to know what is going on. Once they realise dangerous opposition has emerged they will want to know who the mercenaries are and where they intend to strike. If the Travellers are not careful about operational security they might run into an ambush.

The Opposition

There are three major criminal gangs within the port. All are similar in terms of organisation and numbers, but one has access to military-grade infantry weapons. The others make do with civilian weaponry and the odd laser carbine. Their headquarters are located in difficult to access parts of the installation, making it likely the Travellers will be detected as they approach. This can be offset by clever use of a diversion or an unexpected avenue of approach. One possibility is to use the maintenance shafts to move deep into a gang's territory before commencing operations. People who live in the installation tend to forget these even exist, although some criminals use them to move illicit goods. The Travellers might encounter unrelated criminal activity if they choose this option.

The gangs will fight, and hard, if they are attacked but they are not military units. Morale is low, so whilst initial resistance is stiff the gang will falter once casualties are taken. This is possibly to the detriment of the mercenaries, who may be forced to pursue fleeing gunmen through unfamiliar areas instead of taking them out in a simple firefight.

Surprise should be easy to achieve when the first raid is made, so long as the Travellers have been careful to conceal their intentions. After this the gangs will be on the alert and will bribe or threaten their contacts for information on the mercenaries. By the time of the third raid the gangs will either be waiting and watchful or will have gone to ground. In that case further intelligence work will be necessary to find the leaders, perhaps using documents left behind in their hastily abandoned headquarters.

The operation is likely to be over in a few days. The company will pay a bonus of Cr25000 for a solid purge of the gangs and at least double this if the Travellers get the job done quickly and cleanly. There will be no legal complications unless the Travellers do something truly appalling.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Gunmen	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	–3
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	5	–1
Reputation	4	–1

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

1: CRITICAL: Eliminate the three major gangs plaguing the port operators.
2: IMPORTANT: Do not cause collateral casualties among the port population.
3: ROUTINE: Make the raids quickly, taking no more than three days from first to last.
4: ROUTINE: Maintain secrecy and achieve surprise.
5: ROUTINE: Do not suffer any serious/fatal casualties.

With one Critical, one Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 13. A fast, precise execution will impress the client, who may well have other work for the mercenaries.

ADMINISTERING KNOCKING ON DOORS

This is a straightforward application of boot to booty. The mercenaries have a refreshingly simple remit and a client who just wants the problem gone. Smart Travellers will do some intelligence and reconnaissance and conceal their intentions with a suitable cover story. With some good planning the raids may be completed without significant resistance and even if the gangs are able to fight back the difference between professionals and gunmen will be readily apparent.

The gangs will not have time to mount an oblique challenge if the Travellers act quickly. If there are delays, the gangs will lean on officials to suspend the Travellers' operations or interfere in them and might try to paralyse the mercenaries with a lawsuit. This is a common gambit, often based on the premise that the mercenary operation is unlawful in some way. Once begun, a credible lawsuit can force the mercenaries to shut down operations for days, weeks or even longer, and even if unsuccessful will give the gangs time to mount a better resistance or escape. Stalling an operation in the courts until the money runs out is a valid tactic but cannot work if the operation is completed before the case is even presented. Thus mercenaries who are discreet, quick and decisive in their actions are likely to succeed whilst indecisive Travellers may face an uphill struggle.

INFORMATION WARRIORS

Support, Section. Cr50000 plus bonus.

The Lennent Treaty States, or LTS, have typically responded to threats from the Merrain Federation in a disorganised manner. Attempts to create a more cohesive doctrine have for the most part failed but in recent months a new initiative has been launched. This might actually create an effective joint force but the planners have a limited budget and wish to ensure they spend wisely.

The LTS offers Cr50000 for a small team of experts to obtain intelligence on the nature and deployment of Federation forces. This can be done by any means necessary but LTS will deny responsibility if mercenaries are caught in Federation territory. It is desirable that the Travellers ascertain if offworld mercenaries or equipment are present among Federation forces and to determine the specifics of front-line weapons. This includes armour thicknesses on tanks, performance of aircraft and the quality of guidance systems on missiles. Bonuses are payable for significant information blocks.

Combat is not desirable and in the event that mercenaries are engaged with Federation forces no support can be provided.

Referee's Information

The adage that 'if you want peace, prepare for war' does not mention that in order to prepare effectively you may have to take actions that could cause the war you are trying to avert. The LTS is willing to take the risk if it enables them to build a force tailored to defeating the Federation's military. However, the planners are aware of the possibility of triggering a war they are not ready for and wish to minimise this by using a team of – they hope – experts who can get the job done without being detected. The LTS leadership has no firm ideas about how the mercenaries might operate. So long as they are discreet and effective their methods are their own business.

The Safe Option: Electronic Warfare

Much can be learned by electronic warfare at a distance. Local (TL7) communications equipment cannot resist decryption attempts by TL10+ gear and whilst most of the radio chatter is entirely mundane and not very informative an intelligence expert can build up a picture of Federation forces over time. The odd snippet of specific information can be gleaned from the radio traffic and other emissions but for the most part this is general information. The Travellers will be able to present a detailed analysis of radar and similar sensor coverage and capabilities based on emissions detection and the LTS is willing to pay a bonus of Cr25000 for this.

Obtaining this information requires establishing electronic listening posts close enough to intercept emissions and signals. A hill close to the border would do, although ideally the Travellers will conduct EW operations at various points to ensure they have as much data as possible to analyse. They may not think of it but there is no reason why the Travellers cannot enter Federation territory under some suitable cover story and move around entirely legally. They will not be able to use dedicated signals-intelligence and similar equipment if they do this but high-tech personal devices can collect some useful data. The Travellers will be challenged from time-to-time and may have to account for their activities but should be able to bluff their way through providing the forces they encounter do not realise how powerful their electronic devices really are.

Obtaining Blueprints

Specifics of vehicles and equipment typically require examining one or getting hold of the blueprints. One option for the latter is the Central Defence Computer, which is an imported TL9 system. It is reasonably secure but would not be hard to hack into using higher-tech equipment if access can be gained. There are few remote access points to the system, which is physically isolated from the Federation's rather basic datanet. The computer is located in a heavily secured military installation deep within Federation territory.

Getting access to the central defence computer would require some impressive deception or covert infiltration of the base and would be extremely hazardous. It could be done by inventive and bold Travellers but any mis-step would result in alerting the entire Federation military whilst deep in its territory. The Travellers are unlikely to escape such a situation. Even using one of the remote access points is tricky, as they are well secured. The weak point in this setup is the Federation's senior command staff, some of whom prefer convenience to security. Whilst most access points are located in secure command facilities, the senior commanders have mobile computer systems with the requisite hardware to communicate with the central system.

All remote access points have a hardwired security system, without which the central computer will not communicate with any other device. It would not be hard to replicate the device using more advanced technology but to do so one must be examined. This requires getting into a remote access point or obtaining a general's laptop and either using it or – better – duplicating the security hardware then replacing it. Travellers who think of this option might be able to find a way to pull it off and if they do they will have complete access to the Federation military database until their intrusion is detected and protocols changed.

If the Travellers do decide to penetrate Federation territory they can obtain plans and blueprints from maintenance installations or other bases without accessing the central computer. This is risky but could pay dividends if the Travellers can get away with it. A simple smash-and-grab raid might work but would certainly increase tensions. If the Travellers can obtain information without the Federation knowing they have it there will be no increase in tensions and the client will be extremely pleased.

Examining Equipment

Covert infiltration might be used to obtain access to equipment such as armoured vehicles and aircraft but an alternative to sneaking into Federation territory is to locate equipment left behind on old battlegrounds. Much can be learned from a wrecked tank or downed aircraft and there are a few as a result of the Federation's previous conquests. It may also be possible to buy information – legally or otherwise – or to examine weapon systems by means of deception. If the Travellers can convince the Federation they are representatives of a neutral state on Merrain interested in buying weaponry, they may be able to take all the measurements they want – and might even get a test drive. Some neutral states that have already received weapons from the Federation might be willing to let the Travellers examine them. Again, this might happen through deception, bribery or some other means of persuasion.

Mission Success and Opposition

The LTS leadership will pay bonuses of Cr50000 for good, solid information on each of: Federation tanks and armoured vehicles, aircraft and air-to-air missiles, and maritime warfare capabilities. In each of these three cases the planners want a mix of technical data and information on deployments and tactics. A lot of that can be gained from electronic warfare operations, as noted above, or from conducting a detailed analysis of publicly available records and documents.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Federation Security Detachment	—
Unit Size	Section to Platoon	—
Unit Type	Motorised Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	7	–0

The Travellers could blow the mission so badly they end up fighting the Federation's military but they are more likely to have to deal with patrols or civilian security personnel if they are circumspect or use deception. A group busted as they travel around the Federation under false pretences faces little more than a fine and deportation, and it may be that the Federation's authorities never realise what the Travellers were up to. On the other hand, if they decide to steal a tank and present it to their client for inspection the Travellers are likely to meet a robust response – not to mention causing an international incident.

The most likely opposition if conflict occurs is a security detachment travelling in wheeled soft-skinned vehicles similar to a militarised SUV with a pintle-mounted machinegun. Heavier forces – including armour and artillery – will take longer to deploy and would only be fielded in the event of a major clash. If the mercenaries were to get into a stand-up fight with a security detachment and somehow win it, they will gain the full attention of the military.

Security personnel are armed with TL7 assault rifles and light support weapons, including some mounted on unarmoured ground vehicles. Security units are part of the regular army and trained for large-scale combat but spend most of their time operating in small patrols and detachments, or manning installations and checkpoints.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

1: PARAMOUNT: Maintain deniability even if hostilities occur. Do not cause a war.
2: IMPORTANT: Present a solid analysis of general Federation capabilities and doctrine.
3: ROUTINE: Obtain solid information on armoured warfare capabilities.
4: ROUTINE: Obtain solid information on air warfare capabilities.
5: ROUTINE: Obtain solid information on maritime warfare capabilities.

With one Paramount, one Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 14. If the mercenaries manage not to increase tensions the client will pay the basic fee even if they do not obtain meaningful information. LTS would prefer the mission to fail safely than to succeed and cause more problems.

ADMINISTERING INFORMATION WARRIORS

The mercenaries are basically acting as spies and intelligence analysts rather than soldiers and will need to think outside the usual small-unit tactics. They could set up cover identities and enter the Federation's territory openly. If they do, the Travellers will find that routine security is quite good in terms of practice and execution but it is limited by TL7 capabilities. Documents forged at a much higher Tech Level will seem completely authentic and it will be easy to conceal most devices. The majority of the population do not have access to high-tech imports and will not expect cameras, listening devices and the like to be so small, so may not think to look for them. Security personnel may not be familiar with the capabilities of offworld electronics and can be deceived into believing devices have just a few simple functions. It may not occur to local guards that what looks like a book-reader or navigational aid is in fact a high-capability handcomp capable of auto-hacking a local computer in moments.

If the Travellers take a less subtle approach they are on their own. The LTS will not support or assist them in any way. This does not rule out a hard intrusion style of information grab but the Travellers will have to make their own plans for exfiltration afterwards. The locals have few grav vehicles but their combat aircraft can possibly intercept one. This might be a less-than-subtle way of finding out how good the Federation's radar and anti-aircraft missiles are. Making this much noise will not please the client, since LTS is the obvious suspect when someone starts causing a ruckus in the Federation. Deniability is useful but what the LTS military planners really want is for the Federation not to realise anything has happened.

ARTISTIC LICENSE

Security, Section. Cr 25000 per month plus bonus. Ongoing.

Celebrated art dealer Rica Lovell recently sold her entire private collection before beginning a truly extravagant retirement. Among the works of art offered for sale was a four painting set entitled 'seasons of the forest', which was purchased on behalf of an anonymous collector. The paintings are to be shipped under the tightest possible security, by a roundabout route, to their new owner.

An anonymous client is offering Cr25000 per month for a small unit of mercenaries with plenty of firepower to escort the paintings on their journey. They will be in transit for around three months aboard liners and high-security packet boats and the paintings will be swapped out at some point in the journey. The mercenaries will continue to guard the secure transportation container as if the paintings were still in it, ensuring that the final destination and therefore clues to the identity of the buyer are not revealed. A bonus of Cr100000 is payable when the mercenaries make a formal handover of the secure casket at a misleading destination. Passage aboard the vessels will be provided and will for the most part be to a high standard of comfort and convenience.

Combat is not expected but the paintings are fabulously valuable and may be a target for criminals. The client will obtain special licenses for the mercenaries to retain personal weapons aboard ship but they must be discreet when interacting with other passengers.

Referee's Information

The mission is genuine but there is an additional layer of deception in place. The actual paintings are en route via a low profile courier, whilst information on the Travellers' mission has been leaked. The client hopes they will seem authentic enough to attract any attempt to steal the paintings and if they deal with it successfully so much the better.

En Route

The trip itself has the potential to be something of a vacation. The Travellers will, for the most part, be travelling aboard high-quality vessels and have access to all their facilities. There is a certain amount of meandering and backtracking on the route, which necessitates changing ships several times but a secure cargo handover is child's play to the shipping industry.

One downside of the mission is having to interact with entitled rich people. Most are pleasant enough but there are always those who have to treat the 'lower orders' with contempt. If they are fooled into thinking the mercenaries are fellow rich idiots these people will turn their assumed-to-be-shared contempt on stewards and other crew and also any middle passengers who may be aboard. Mercenaries tend to lack airs and graces, so it is likely they will stand out as members of these 'lower orders'. If so, they will find that some of the high passengers are distinctly unpleasant and not at all worried about retaliation. They 'know' the mercenaries cannot do anything to them so will seek to put them in their place at every opportunity. This may have repercussions if there are incidents during the trip where the mercenaries could help their fellow passengers but might not want to.

There are plenty of people who travel aboard high-end passenger ships and secure couriers who are pleasant to be around, of course, and it may be that the Travellers make contacts during their mission. One interesting plot twist is for the Travellers to encounter someone else multiple times, as if they too are swapping ships and retracing their steps. This individual or group could be trying to penetrate the Travellers' security or may have an entirely legitimate and unconnected purpose aboard. They might even be carrying out the same sort of convoluted tracks-covering secure delivery – a real one, perhaps, or a decoy like the Travellers.

At some point it will become apparent that the supposedly secret transportation mission is known, at least on the rich-people grapevine. The mercenaries will receive requests – and also demands – to view the paintings from people who will be very displeased to be declined by a mere soldier of fortune. Allowing a viewing will breach the terms of the mercenaries' contract and also reveal that the secure casket contains nothing. Within hours of the next planetfall the grapevine will know the paintings are missing or were never there. This blows the mission and may expose the real courier to attack.

Interception

If the mercenaries do not open the casket their secret is safe but this attracts a different problem. Another band of mercenaries has been contracted to 'recover' the paintings by any means necessary and will attempt to do so later in the journey. This might take the form of an attack in port, infiltration of the ship and an inside job, or piracy by an armed vessel. Naturally, as soon as danger threatens any rich bullies nearby will want the mercenaries to protect them and may be terribly put out at being refused.

The most likely way an interception will be attempted is during a transfer between vessels. This might be scheduled or necessitated by a problem with the ship. In the latter case, it is likely that the 'problem' will be imposed by port officials bribed to hold the ship on spurious grounds or to 'find' a fault during an inspection. Alternatively, the crew might be induced to 'discover' a need to remain in port for long enough that the passengers and cargo need to be transferred to another vessel.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Mercenaries	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Infantry	–3
Combat	10	+2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	11	+2
Morale	13	+2
Reputation	8	–0

A force of mercenaries has been hired to take the secure casket and will strike without warning. The Travellers might see warning signs and prepare themselves but if they are complacent they may well be caught off guard. The attackers are not acting out of malice and will not cause unnecessary casualties but are quite willing to open fire on sight, use snipers or booby traps, or any other measures to ensure they complete their mission without taking casualties.

The mercenaries will be as well armed as they can be in the circumstances. If they have to smuggle weapons into a spaceport, the mercenaries will have concealable equipment such as submachineguns or rifles that can be dismantled. If they have a free hand the attackers might roll in with battlefield firepower, possibly even using a vehicle mooting a support weapon.

ADMINISTERING ARTISTIC LICENSE

This is essentially a bodyguard mission, little different to protecting a person travelling under the same circumstances. Much of the journey is mundane but with repeated changes of ships and stopovers in port the mercenaries will have to be vigilant. All manner of additional incidents might occur and indeed this mission could be used as a plot device to get the mercenaries to a place or aboard a ship where the Referee has an adventure waiting for them. The adventure associated with a mercenary ticket will not always be the one implied by the contract and mercenaries can be blindsided by circumstances from time-to-time.

If and when the attack comes it will be suddenly, explosively, violent. The attackers have been paid well to get the job done quickly and as cleanly as possible but above all ruthlessly. It may be that friends the Travellers have made get caught in the crossfire, bringing home to them just how unpleasant their profession looks to outsiders. Ultimately, the Travellers will have succeeded if they are attacked. By drawing attention they have safeguarded the paintings and will be paid even if they failed to defend the secure casket.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

1: IMPORTANT: The casket must remain unopened.
2: ROUTINE: Do not attract attention with incidents, no matter how much provocation.
3: ROUTINE: Maintain routine security on the casket.
4: ROUTINE: Defeat the attempt to seize the casket when it occurs.
5: ROUTINE: Maintain a low profile during the voyage.

With one Important and four Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 11. The mercenaries do not really have to do much for most of the journey and once they have attracted an attack their work is done. If they are an effective decoy the client will be satisfied and pay the bonus. No apologies are made for deceiving the mercenaries, nor for making them a target; this was an essential part of the operation as far as the client is concerned. If the mercenaries have proven discreet and resourceful they may be offered other jobs in the future.

CHAPTER - FOUR

PLATOON TICKETS

The following tickets are aimed at platoon-sized units or the equivalent. A larger force might detach one or more sub-units whilst training the remainder or taking other small tickets and in theory a very cheaply equipped oversized unit might find these tickets viable.

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

Striker, Platoon. Cr150000 plus bonuses.

The planetary government of Djeilf illegally sized corporate assets worth hundreds of millions of Credits during the emergency restructuring of the Suntori Group. Suntori Diversified has made repeated representations to the government for the return of its assets or a negotiated fair-price buyout. Since these efforts have been ignored, the corporation intends to force the government of Djeilf to the negotiating table.

Suntori Diversified is offering Cr150000 plus bonuses for a platoon-sized force to undertake operations against key targets on the world of Djeilf. The corporation is in dispute with the planetary government over ownership of an industrial plant located at the planetary capital. The plant itself is not to be attacked. Targets are government-owned installations elsewhere. The force must provide its own transportation.

The government is expecting action but does not know where and when the blow will fall. The target assets are primarily infrastructure that will be expensive to replace including a major road bridge and installations whose loss will embarrass the government. The intention is to make continued illegal possession of the industrial plant too expensive, forcing the government to negotiate either the removal of its valuable machinery or sale of the plant on favourable terms. The mercenary force can expect resistance from TL8 local troops, who are not expected to be at any given site in large numbers.

Referee's Information

The Travellers will sooner or later notice that many tickets contain biased information. In this case, the question of ownership is debatable and subject to endless legal wrangling. The government can find laws that make its annexation of the factory legal due to 'de facto abandonment' whilst both Suntori factions have a claim to it under their preferred body of law. Suntori Diversified intends to force a resolution regardless of the legal situation. Mercenary operations are legal in this situation but it would be questionable whether the government would view it this way. Units that are properly registered with a licensing agency are protected

by its legal, political and possibly military capabilities; their members can expect to be treated fairly if captured and repatriated as soon as possible. Unregistered mercenaries might slip through the cracks and become victims of an aggrieved state.

Mission Overview

The client has identified three key targets it believes will force the government to the negotiating table. The road bridge at Abenir Gorge has long been lauded as a triumph of local engineering and provides the only major ground route across the gorge for over 100 kilometres. Its destruction would send shockwaves through the population. The governmental broadcasting centre at the world's second city, Cedivve, is an iconic building whose image is used at the beginning of all official announcements. Destroying its famous spire would undermine confidence in the government whilst crippling the broadcasting apparatus might impair the government's ability to maintain public support. The third potential target is a rail freight terminal serving a factory complex. The client considers that wrecking some of the trains and the supporting infrastructure will send a clear message but should not cause much loss of life.

Platoon-level operations are sometimes very straightforward and simple but often require more planning and coordination than section-level missions. In this case the Travellers will have to do some strategic planning if they are to execute their strikes in an effective manner. Ideally, the client wants all three targets hit and subjected to graphic destruction. A bonus of Cr25000 is offered for each of the targets that is heavily damaged – or even just appears to be. This ticket is about creating the impression, correctly or otherwise, that the planetary government cannot protect its assets. If all three targets are successfully hit an additional bonus of Cr25000 is available, bringing the potential total to Cr250000. This is high for a supposedly low-risk job but the client stands to make a fortune in the event of success.

Government Forces and Dispositions

The planetary government is expecting this sort of gambit, since Suntori Diversified has used it before. However, it cannot provide strong garrisons everywhere and has settled for placing a company-sized force at each of the selected locations as well as other potential targets. These are regular army units with little experience of combat, equipped as TL8 infantry. They have a few trucks and light vehicles but are primarily deployed as static defenders.

Support for these garrisons will initially be in the form of aircraft flying from the nearest bases, followed by local response formations composed of wheeled armoured cars and infantry in trucks. A reinforced company or larger force can be on the road in minutes but will take over four hours to reach the bridge. The other two targets can be reinforced in 15-20 minutes if the support force is not distracted.

In addition, the planetary government has hired some mercenaries of its own. This is a platoon-sized force with grav APCs, equipped to TL10 standards. The force is currently based at the capital and will take at least two hours to reach the distant targets selected by the client. However, after the first attack the mercenaries will be moved to a forward operating base where they will be within minutes of the remaining targets.

DEFENSIVE INFANTRY

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Defensive Infantry	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Partial Motorised	0
Combat	17	+2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	6	+1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	8	0

In all probability the mercenaries will face little opposition on their first strike. The garrison will be complacent and simply going through the motions at this point. After the first attack the local garrisons will be alert but still not highly competent but there is a chance of intervention by their supports or the offworld mercenaries. The chance of this is even higher after the second target is struck.

The defensive companies are composed of reasonably well trained but inexperienced infantry, occupying prepared positions reinforced with sandbags and barbed wire. Personnel are armed with TL8 small arms and light support weapons, including shoulder-fired anti-armour and anti-aerospace missiles. Mobility is limited; there are enough light ground vehicles for patrol work and to move part of the force around but overall the companies are considered to be part-motorised.

The response force will deploy in company strength with some attached light armour, forming a mixed infantry/armour battlegroup. Its armoured cars mount light autocannon and are armoured against light support weapons only, whilst the trucks have no protection but carry a machinegun for self-defence. Infantry are equipped much as their static counterparts. An air defence vehicle or two, using autocannon in a high-angle mounting, will accompany a response force.

Air response takes the form of light strike jets with some air-to-air capability. Their primary CBAS characteristic is Bombardment for this reason. Aircraft are armed with missiles and guided bombs and are very vulnerable to high-tech anti-air weapons. They normally deploy in pairs, making a strike the equivalent of a platoon-level force.

RESPONSE FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Response Force	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Company	—
Unit Type	Composite Infantry/ Armour	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	2	–2
Support	2	–2
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	8	0
Reputation	8	0

AIR RESPONSE FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Air Response Force	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Aerospace Strike	—
Unit TL	8	8
Mobility Type	Aerospace	+12
Combat	1	–2
Bombardment	6	0
Aerospace	3	–1
Support	2	–2
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	8	0

The mercenary force hired by the planetary government is a typical 'pseudo-lift infantry' formation, using civilian air/rafts and grav trucks for mobility but fighting as infantry once deployed. Personnel are equipped to TL10 standards, with typical small arms and personal armour and have a small amount of heavier support equipment. This includes a gatling laser anti-aerospace weapon mounted on an unarmoured grav truck and a pair of three-barrelled support mortars transported on other vehicles. The force overall contains more than a platoon's worth of personnel but some remain at base for security or are busy maintaining and repair vehicles. The overall result is that the force can deploy a platoon-sized fighting element.

MERCENARY FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Mercenaries	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Grav-Mobile Infantry	+8
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	–3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	1	–2
Aerospace	3	–1
Support	3	–1
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	10	+1
Reputation	9	+1

Making the Strikes

The client wants graphic damage to infrastructure and iconic buildings rather than casualties, although some will be inevitable. The Travellers' planning may reflect the fact that they do not need to hold the objective for long enough to damage it. If so, they may be able to stage a quick hit-and-run strike that gets their force clear before the response force can even mount up. Interception by aircraft or the grav-mobile mercenaries is always possible during a retirement, although the latter will not pursue closely if there is a significant threat to their soft-skinned vehicles. If, on the other hand, the mercenaries get bogged down or decide to chew their way ever-so-carefully onto the objective, they may still be in place when reinforcements arrive. If they decide to hold the target for some reason they will face an escalating counterattack as more response companies arrive.

Given the nature of the strikes, a force equipped with grav vehicles might simply dash onto the objective and start blasting. A few shots from the gun of a light grav tank will cause enough damage to satisfy the client and might seem laughably easy to the mercenaries. This is in no way unfair – it is what tanks are for and those who can afford them reap the rewards.

A force that does not have this capability will need to get past the defences and place charges or otherwise cause the necessary destruction. This might lead to a running fight in which some defensive concentrations are overrun but others bypassed. Speed, aggression and firepower are the order of the day here. If the Travellers realise this and make a good plan they should succeed but an obsession with eliminating every strongpoint and sniper will result in being bogged down.

Best Wishes

Forcing Negotiations

After each attack the client will try to persuade the planetary government to accept its terms. Rules for negotiation are found on page 113 of *Book 1*. The Situation Indicator starts at 7 – the negotiations are stalled inasmuch as the government is not even listening to the corporation's demands. The mercenaries can send their own representative to negotiate with the government or use the corporation's DM+2 on Persuade checks. The following DMs apply to the Persuade or Diplomat check:

For each successful attack: DM+2
For each unsuccessful attack: DM-2
If attacks have been made but none were successful: additional DM-4

A successful attack is one that inflicts serious damage on the target. The mercenaries do not need to capture and hold their objective; flying past in a grav tank blasting chunks out of the structure will generally do the trick. However, a thorough job will impress the client more, such as rigging the bridge or spire with explosives and dropping the whole lot in one spectacular explosion. This would require at least temporary possession of the objective.

As soon as the Situation Indicator reaches 12 the corporation gets what it wants. Complete acceptance is preferable, of course, since this indicates the government has given in to all the corporation's demands. If the Travellers can achieve this they will be paid the full bonus even if some attacks failed or were not made at all.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: IMPORTANT: Destroy or seriously damage the bridge.
2: IMPORTANT: Destroy or seriously damage the broadcasting centre.
3: IMPORTANT: Destroy or seriously damage the rail yard.
4: ROUTINE: Inflict a significant defeat on government forces at any location for partial completion or at more than one for compete success.
5: ROUTINE: Inflict a defeat on the mercenaries.

In the event that a strike does not have to be made because negotiations have reached Complete Acceptance, it is considered to have been a complete success. The maximum TSI value attainable is 13. Note that a success under these TSI criteria represents how well the mercenaries did what they were hired to do. The ticket may still be a success even if the Suntori negotiators threw away all the advantages the mercenaries gained them – a failure on the part of the client will generally not reflect on the mercenaries.

ADMINISTERING INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

The Travellers can approach this ticket in a variety of ways. Most will choose to launch a series of strikes from a concealed base of operations, making direct attacks on the targets. However, there are other options. Infiltration and sabotage will get the same results or the mercenaries may come up with a more creative option. What matters to the client is getting what they want out of the negotiations, whilst the mercenaries want to get paid and preserve their reputation. The details may take care of themselves.

The upshot of this is that the ticket can play out in a variety of ways. The Referee will have to adjudicate whatever the Travellers do. They may do some good intelligence work, learn of the other mercenaries and impede them in some manner. If they do not, the arrival of a comparably armed and equipped force may be an unpleasant surprise.

The Referee should keep in mind that the local government is alerted but not omniscient. Its forces greatly outnumber the mercenaries and can probably eliminate them in a stand-up fight. If the Travellers expect to just bull their way through they will end up taking serious losses. However, if they are smart and make good use of mobility they should be able to misdirect the government's forces sufficiently to get the job done and escape without becoming bogged down in an escalating battle they cannot win. There is a fundamental lesson to be learned in the mercenary marketplace – winning is not the same thing as destroying all the enemies and taking possession of their stuff. Winning means getting paid and living to fight another day and an expeditious withdrawal after a mission is critical to making this happen.

TIN POT CRACKPOT

Warfighting, Platoon. Cr100000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The continent of Espalen is a vast expanse of semi-desert, which was sparsely settled by small expeditions in the distant past. Few grew beyond the level of independent town-states, creating a patchwork of more or less self-sufficient microstates separated by wide areas of worthless wilderness. Patchy deposits of precious stones and rare minerals have been found in recent years and the idea of unification has finally surfaced. Chief among its proponents is Colonel-Governor Cietin, currently the leader of a three-town microstate.

Colonel-Governor Cietin is offering Cr100000 per month with a hiring bonus of Cr50000 for a platoon-sized unit to lead the expansion of her state. There will also be a completion bonus calculated as a percentage of the fee thus far accrued – thereby rewarding loyal service – and the success the unit has achieved. The force will be expected to undertake a small war of conquest against nearby towns, supported by local troops as necessary.

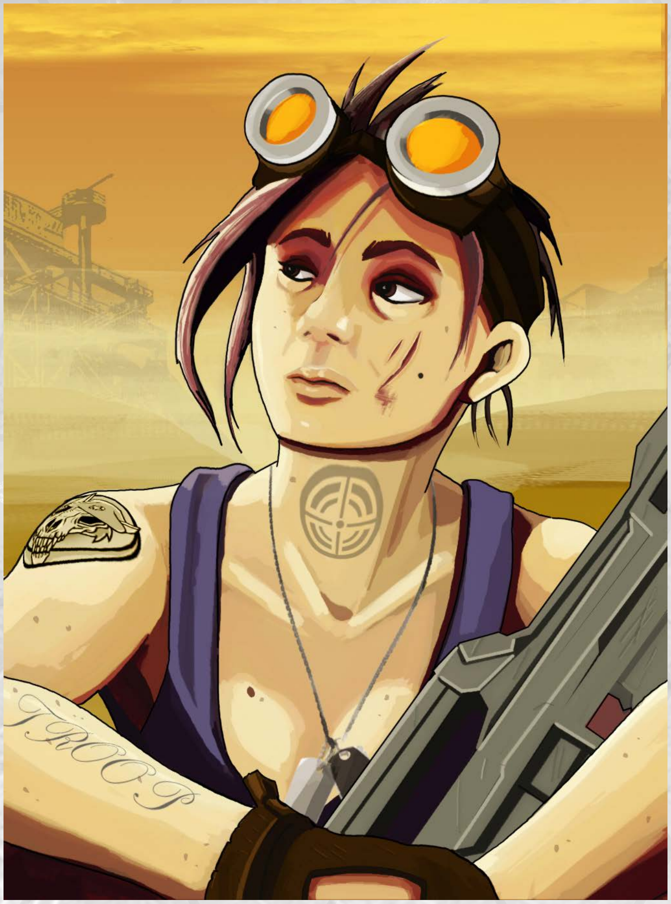
Opposition is not expected to be significant. The world has a mature TL6 economy with few imported items and enemy forces will be small. Most towns have only a militia for defence, with a scattering of professionals to lead them.

Referee's Information

Cietin is what might be described as an ambitious nutjob. Her title is made up but she does have popular support in her home town. The other two she controls were conquered at considerable cost by her forces, which made her realise she needed a proper military force. Such is the local political situation that a platoon of mercenaries is a strategically important asset in Espalen and besides it is all Cietin can afford.

Cietin's forces are essentially her home town militia, enlarged to include unenthusiastic 'volunteers' from the conquered settlements. These are not as firmly under control as Cietin thinks but there is little overt resistance to her regime. That may change if Cietin's war of conquest causes serious casualties or overstretches the budget, which it has already begun to do.

Both of the captured towns have modest resources which can be exploited, whilst the 'capital' does not. This is what sparked the whole unification concept – Cietin realised that other towns had got lucky and would eclipse hers and simply could not stand the idea. She has funded the war and the mercenary force by selling off assets and using up reserves. The mercenaries' operations are expected to somehow enrich Cietin's regime, which might be possible in the short term if a certain amount of plundering is permitted.



Opposing Forces

The militia used by all the local towns are of very low quality, armed with basic small arms and little more. The odd mortar or light machinegun is available, usually mounted on a civilian vehicle or towed by one. Forces on both sides are capable of putting up a decent fight from prepared positions but have little concept of cooperation and mutual support. They are so tactically inexperienced that the simplest flanking movement seems like a masterstroke. Unfortunately, in the case of Cietin's forces, this ineptitude is accompanied by an excess of ego.

'Volunteers' from the captured towns are mostly serving because they have to, although some have bought into the dream of becoming leaders among conquered states, whilst the majority of Cietin's militia are becoming convinced they are conquering heroes. They have a tendency to strut about bullying people whenever they can but to a professional eye it is obvious they lack basic skills such as safe weapons handling. Accidents are not uncommon even when not under the stress of combat.

Cietin's militia is fully motorised, having commandeered almost every vehicle it encounters. Some have been converted, with tops cut off to allow pintle-mounted weapons to be carried or crude armour to be welded over the bodywork. Breakdowns are common with these overloaded vehicles.

Opposing militia are no more competent and typically less well-armed. Where Cietin has gone to some trouble to obtain military small arms, most local militias have to rely on whatever civilian weapons are available.

CIETIN'S MILITIA

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Cietin's Militia	—
Unit Size	Section to Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	6	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	1	–2
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	4	–2
Morale	6	0
Reputation	3	–1

TOWN MILITIA

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Town Militia	—
Unit Size	Section to Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	6	0
Mobility Type	Partially Motorised	0
Combat	3	–2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	3	–2
Morale	4	–2
Reputation	5	–1

War of Conquest

Cietin is eager to have the mercenaries overrun everything in sight and is not tolerant of what she terms as 'excuses'. If the Travellers tread carefully they can convince her to expand in a more steady manner, choosing a target and demanding submission before launching an attack.

The mercenaries may be able to persuade some towns not to fight, although this will be a struggle since Cietin's regime is unpleasant and most towns have a long tradition of independence. Most will resist, in some cases with assistance from others who feel it is in their interest to fight in someone else's back yard. The Travellers will be up against bands of totally inexperienced militia who have a tendency to scatter in panic once they take casualties. There are always a handful of would-be heroes or idiots who do not understand how much danger they are in and the mercenaries may be wary of having to eliminate them. It may be possible to talk some into surrendering but their treatment by Cietin's people may make this more difficult as time goes on.

Overall, conquests are not difficult to make. Towns cannot put up much resistance against the mercenaries and Cietin's militia will impose a harsh controlling regime on those towns that do not voluntarily join their expanding state – as well as some that do. The expansion will, overall, be a success unless the Travellers are extremely incompetent but capturing towns was never the problem here.

If the Travellers do not recognise the situation right away, the red flags will begin to pile up. Money is short but Cietin is spending it anyway. She wants to create a sort of brand identity for her new state – which is not in itself a bad idea – but is going about it by purchasing status symbols. She wants a grav limousine, ideally a classic model, and will go on about this at length every time she interacts with 'her' mercenaries. Impressive and fanciful uniforms start to appear on the militia, accompanied by medals, and some of her gunmen acquire titles as they move into political posts. This means that towns will be taken over by someone whose credentials come down to a big hat and an itchy trigger-finger.

This can still be a 'clean' mercenary job but the usual model is for the mercenaries to defeat whatever forces are defending a town or installation, then they are pulled back 'to rest' whilst the militia – soon renamed the Unified Defence Force – secures the objective. Secures, in this case, translates to plundering the living hell out of it. The mercenaries will soon be aware they are the spearhead of a rather unpleasant campaign of conquest and plunder.

Unification could be a good thing in the long run, allowing efficient pooling of resources but for the foreseeable future it is a series of small-scale conquests that wreck the local economy for the sake of plundering enough to pay for the operation. Personnel have to be detached to control the towns and installations, weakening the loyal component of the militia, which then has to be shored up with coerced 'volunteers'. The whole thing is a house of cards run by a delusional narcissist and sooner or later there will be rebellions or internal powerplays. How the mercenaries deal with that, if they are still present, is up to them.

If the Travellers are wise they will get out of this contract as soon as they decently can. It is considered bad form to leave a contract and join the fight against a former employer but it does sometimes happen and is generally accepted by the mercenary community. Whether the towns will accept help from their oppressor's spearhead force and whether the prospect is financially viable, is an open question. It is possible the Travellers will end up toppling the Cietin regime either on behalf of a consortium of towns or on a freelance basis. Of course, revolutions tend to produce unpleasant regimes so things might not get any better. The Unification of Espalen – or its return to comfortable disunity – could become an ongoing campaign in its own right.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: IMPORTANT: Provide Cietin with a string of conquests and victories.
2: ROUTINE: Keep friction with the militia to a minimum.
3: ROUTINE: Capture at least some targets intact.
4: ROUTINE: Obtain status symbols for Cietin.
5: ROUTINE: Improve the efficiency of Cietin's forces.

The maximum TSI score for this ticket is 11. Overwhelming a bunch of scared militia is no great achievement. Success in this context means keeping Cietin happy enough to pay the bonus, which is likely to be around 10% of the fees accrued so far but may be more if the Travellers perform better than her expectations.

ADMINISTERING TIN-POT CRACKPOT

There are many stories to be told here, depending on how the Travellers feel about their patron. They might just do the job and collect the money – after all, this sort of thing is nothing new to experienced mercenaries. If so, they may move on before the inevitable collapse or actually prevent it. It would not take all that much to consolidate Cietin's gains into an organised state and build an economy. However, the biggest obstacle to that is Cietin herself. She will want to keep going until she has conquered everything and ultimately that means stretching herself too thin. The mercenaries are likely to end up as a fire brigade, dashing from one internal crisis to the next whilst fending off demands for an explanation why they are not conquering more towns.

The actual military operations are small scale and typically one-sided. A town of 5,000 or so people can field quite a lot of militia if they are desperate but they will be disorganised and easy to scatter. The Travellers can expect to be heavily outnumbered but their compact force can deliver telling blows at the point of decision if well handled. Watching Cietin's militia make a hash of mopping up operations might not sit well with the mercenaries.

The mercenaries are under contract to Cietin and bound by its terms. If they turn white knight before the contact expires, their mercenary careers are over. Once they are released from it, they can of course do as they please. This might include toppling Cietin or propping her up, accepting spurious promotions from her hand or just pocketing the fee and moving on.

AID TO CIVIL POWER

Security, Platoon. Cr75000 plus bonus.

Life in the sealed city of Nulcef tends to be dull and repetitive but standards of living have traditionally been high and the population were safe from their world's hostile conditions. Those who craved excitement could find it in the 'outside' industries or through a programme of arts and entertainment. In recent years a decline in the world's major industries – notably chemical extraction and processing – has led to budget cuts. Combined with rising unemployment this has created a bored and angry populace with nothing to distract them. The city has seen riots and violence in recent months, targeted upon the governing elite and senior officials of the industries that once made the city prosperous.

The city governors are offering Cr75000 for a platoon-sized unit with urban security experience to quell riots and arrest the ringleaders. Less-lethal options will be used unless absolutely necessary. Some general security work, guarding installations and personnel, will also be undertaken. A bonus is payable if the situation is brought under control within the projected four week period of operations and if not an extension to the contract will be made on the same terms.

The mercenary force can expect to have to deal with angry mobs throwing objects but no significant armed resistance to its operations.

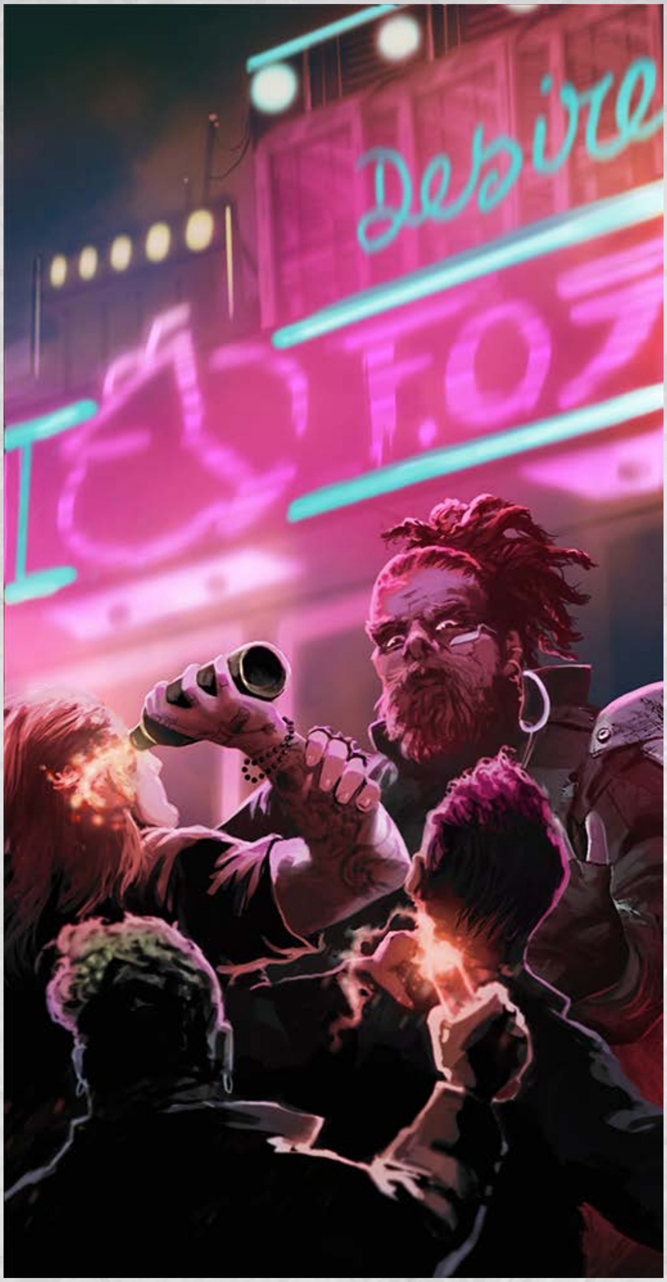
Referee's Information

The situation is more or less as represented but both sides have moved to a hard-line stance that makes escalation inevitable. If the mercenaries care about the rights and wrongs of the situation they will discover that there are plenty of both. The decline in critical industries is not really anyone's fault and despite allegations of grift and corruption the business leaders have generally behaved in an honourable manner. The decline was caused by external factors coupled with decisions that seemed good at the time but which have since proven to be flawed. Funding cuts were inevitable and with them came disaffection, which was fuelled by people with an agenda or just looking for someone to blame.

What was avoidable was the move to the present situation. Both 'sides' wanted too much from one another. The populace wanted jobs and diversions that could not be funded and the elite wanted the populace to be satisfied with the little they gave. The elite blame an ungrateful, grasping populace whilst the people blame a greedy elite. The truth is somewhere in the middle. Rioting was met with an excess of force, creating ever greater resentment. The situation has reached a point where the city leaders want to bring in experts to break the will of the rioters – and whom they can blame for any further excesses that may occur.

Quelling the Riots

The mercenary force is not employed to consider rights and wrongs or the niceties of the legal system. Their job is to bring the rioting under control and whilst they could theoretically achieve this by using lethal force they will be exceeding their remit. Lethal force is permissible in self-



defence but gunning down rioters 'because they posed a potential threat' will land the Travellers in court at least. It may also inflame the situation to the point where unrest turns into revolution. Instead the Travellers must de-escalate the overall situation by using force judiciously.

The Travellers will be faced with a series of violent protests and outright riots. Their remit is to break up the riots and ideally arrest the ringleaders. This either means going into a hostile crowd to drag out anyone who looks like they are giving orders or to observe them and make an arrest later. The client controls the local legal process, so anyone arrested will simply be dumped in a holding facility 'awaiting trial' and kept there until the situation calms down.

By chipping away at the ringleaders the Travellers can gradually bring the situation under control. They may be attacked with improvised weapons or have objects hurled at them but the situation will not escalate into lethal violence unless the Travellers make the first move. Capturing enough ringleaders and breaking up riots may eventually discourage the populace enough that local forces can regain control but the process will be much quicker if both sides can be encouraged to negotiate.

The interplay between the Travellers and an active riot can be interesting. One option is to contain the riot and wait for the participants to get tired or hungry. This is quite a 'soft' approach but can work under some circumstances. However, agitators will try to get others to provoke the Travellers or take action they have to respond to. Containment requires patience and determination, which can be a tall order when rioters are throwing objects or come threateningly close.

A more active approach is to combine containment with measures likely to disperse the rioters. These might include water cannon, tear gas or specialised anti-riot weapons such as sonic or microwave devices intended to cause severe discomfort. If the rioters get too close they may be driven back by an aggressive advance using batons or similar less-lethal weapons. An even more robust version of this tactic uses electrical stun devices or large calibre soft projectiles. Accidental injuries and even fatalities are possible, which may escalate tensions even further.

Charging into an active riot to grab suspected ringleaders or those who are likely to have weapons is a standard tactic for security forces. It can be dangerous but this is mitigated by the same tactics as used in more lethal combat – one element seizes the target, another covers their withdrawal and a reserve stands ready to assist if either is in danger of being swamped. It is possible to chip away at a riot like this until the most belligerent members are in custody and the remainder lose their will to carry on.

The mercenaries might also try propaganda and negotiation. Neither will work alone but with a combination of arrests and apparent control of the situation the Travellers might convince the rioters to disperse. A policy of identifying those who become prominent and taking them into custody after they have returned home can also discourage the remainder. Most are just people who are angry and frustrated. If they realise they cannot achieve anything but risk incarceration many will give up.

The Travellers may have other ideas, which may or may not work. Excessive brutality will bring a rebuke from the client, since it might have consequences for them and may eventually result in termination of contract. On the other hand, if the mercenaries are careful and professional they will be able to restore order. A credible attempt at negotiation by the governmental and business elite will also help, although the Travellers may have to convince them it is worth making the effort.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: IMPORTANT: Get the situation under control by breaking up riots and protests.
2: IMPORTANT: Arrest and detain at least 12 high-value suspects.
3: ROUTINE: Do not kill anyone, except in self-defence against a lethal threat.
4: ROUTINE: Make overtures to the populace about negotiating with the elites.
5: ROUTINE: Convince the elites to negotiate.

The highest possible TSI for this ticket is 12, which requires the Travellers to patiently endure violence and gradually remove ringleaders from the equation whilst setting up a possible negotiated resolution. This is not mentioned in their brief but often a client does not really know what is necessary to get the outcome they want. Hiring mercenaries is as much about obtaining expert advice as it is getting things done.

ADMINISTERING AID TO CIVIL POWER

The situation can be abstracted as a set of negotiations, with each set of events being a phase in the proceedings. If the Travellers successfully defuse a riot they get a chance to persuade one side or the other to consider reopening talks. If they use excessive force or are unsuccessful in making an arrest the position moves the other way. Once both sides have agreed to talks the mercenaries will have to keep the negotiators safe from those who would prefer to keep the situation ongoing. If instead the mercenaries just want to break the will of the populace this can also be administered as a negotiation, with each serious blow – such as a set of arrests – creating an opportunity to advance the mercenaries' position.

TARGET HARDENING

Cadre, Platoon. Cr75000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.
Suntori Unified is the successor to the Suntori Business Group and legal owner of all its assets. This position has been challenged by a company unlawfully using the Suntori brand identity to pass itself off as something called Suntori Diversified. After losing several legal battles, Suntori Diversified has escalated into attacks on Unified's holdings, usually carried out by proxy forces hired on the mercenary market. To defend against this aggression, Suntori Unified wishes to train a workers' militia at one of its larger factory sites.

Suntori Unified is offering Cr75000 per month plus a bonus on successful completion for a cadre force in platoon strength to train industrial workers in small arms handling and elementary security practices. Training is to include search techniques, infiltrator identification and detection of explosive devices as well as direct combat. Military operations will not be required of the militia; they are simply a backup to regular security forces at their place of work.

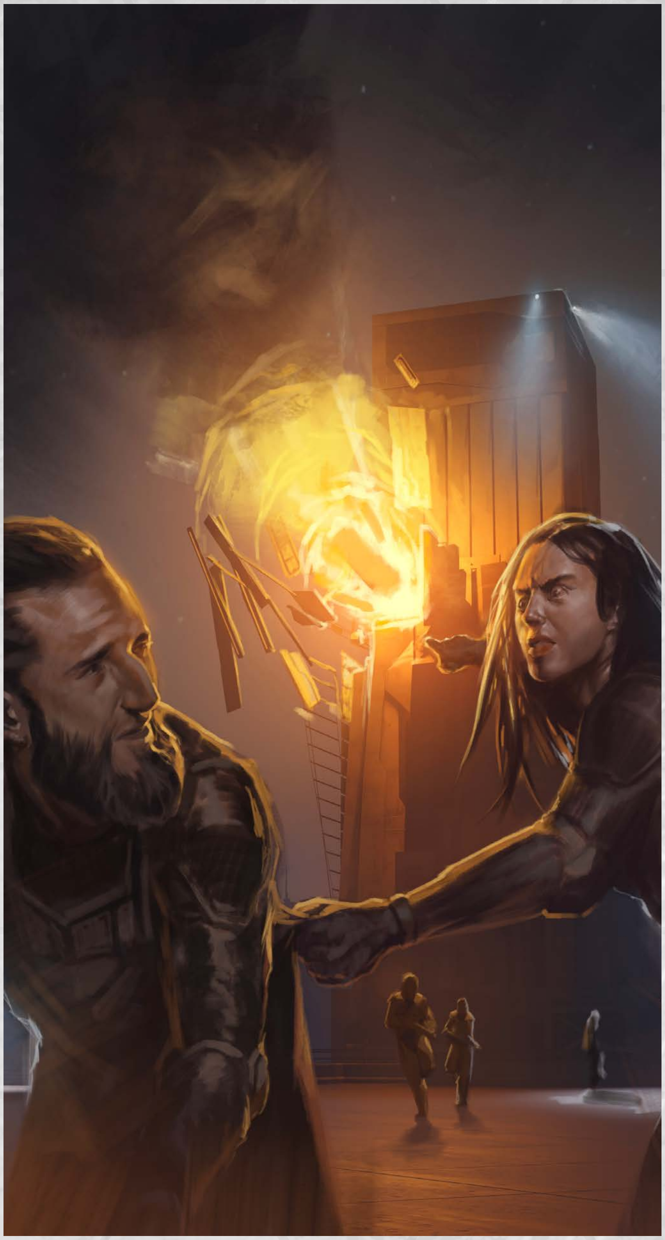
Combat is not expected but the mercenary force must run realistic exercises that may simulate combat situations.

Referee's Information

The plant is quite large, with an ore terminal leading into a processing works and smelting plant in addition to a fabrication plant. The installation makes components for heavy industry, which are shipped off to various destinations in bulk containers. The installation has a security force in the direct employ of Suntori Unified but whilst they are competent enough these personnel are spread too thin to properly secure the plant. The intent is to create large numbers of low-skilled backup personnel who can help cover ground during an intruder search and who know what to look for in case of sabotage. The concept is one of routine security rather than defeating an attack by a serious military force.

Deploying

By the time the mercenaries reach the plant, the situation has worsened. There have been several intrusions into the plant, one of which turned into a firefight, and a couple of small bombs have been detonated. The workers are frightened and threatening to go on strike or simply leave for other, safer jobs. The mercenaries' first task will be to convince them to stay at their posts.



The attempt at persuasion can be roleplayed using the standard *Traveller* rules or abstracted using the negotiation rules on page 113 of *Book 1*. The workers are vocal and argumentative, citing examples of how people have been, or could be, injured. It is clear their position is emotional rather than logical, meaning they cannot be swayed by cold, rational arguments. The Travellers will have to inspire, reassure or frighten them into remaining.

The mercenaries will need to get going straight away if they are to avert a mass walkout at the plant. A demonstration of intent and capabilities will help but at this point the mercenaries lack solid information and may be unable to take meaningful measures. A period of orientation and intelligence-gathering may be in order.

Training the Workforce

Assuming the workers can be convinced to stay, the Travellers will need to start training them. The 'fun stuff' like small arms training will build confidence but the workers are worried about infiltrators and bombs, which requires more complex training. The Travellers must deliver theoretical and practical training then run exercises to put it into practice. This requires undertaking a thorough exploration of the site, which in turn may lead to revelations.

There have been infiltrations and acts of sabotage on several occasions. Some of these were entirely external but in some cases there is evidence of inside help or insurmountable difficulties in getting into the plant without it. If the mercenaries are thorough in their investigation and try to figure out how the saboteurs got in, they will eventually conclude that someone, or perhaps several people, are assisting the infiltrators. It may be that the reason no-one can figure out how the saboteurs got into the secure parts of the installation is because they did not – they were already inside.

Once the mercenaries know there are insiders at work they will need to find out who they are. A careful look at workers' backgrounds will turn up some probable candidates but it is slow going. Likewise security camera footage will reveal suspects but there is a lot of it and it is strangely patchy. If it is obvious the Travellers are looking for insiders, some of the workers will disappear. The only way to catch any of them will be to conceal the investigation and arrest the perpetrators by surprise.

This will require painstaking intelligence work, possibly undertaken by personnel with no background in the field. Help is available from the locals but the question of who to trust is a difficult one. Suspects will begin to emerge either by inference from their background and areas they have access to or by looking at surveillance footage and work logs. The Travellers might discover some unconnected information as well; workplace romances or pilfering that has nothing to do with the present situation but could be of benefit to the mercenaries or the infiltrators. Indeed, it may be that someone is being blackmailed into helping the infiltrators as a result of their illicit activities.

Exposing the insiders will stop the campaign of harassment and sabotage but Suntori Diversified has another plan. Its original intent was to scare off a lot of the workers, requiring the hiring of more, which would allow Diversified to build up a force already in the plant. It has hired a platoon-sized mercenary force to seize the installation with the assistance of this advance party and will now push ahead with its plans.

Under Attack

A few days after the insiders are rounded up or forced into hiding, the mercenaries make their attack. They will mostly be equipped in a similar manner to the Travellers and about as skilled and expect to have the advantage of surprise. Whether they achieve that depends on how diligent the Travellers are and how well they have trained their new security personnel.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Attacking Mercenaries	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Partial Grav	+4
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	3	–1
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	7	0

The Travellers have an advantage in terms of numbers, since they can call on the assistance of the full-time security contingent and the militia as well. However, these are not combat troops and are facing a professional force. If the Referee wants to give the Travellers additional problems to solve the mercenaries might have a light grav tank or some similar powerful asset which the defenders will have to counter somehow.

The client expected to pay a bonus of Cr75000 at the end of the contract if the Travellers were successful but this did not factor in the possibility of a major attack. If the Travellers manage to retain control of the installation and it remains in functional condition, the client will pay a total bonus of Cr150000.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: CRITICAL: Ensure the installation remains in the hands of Suntori Unified.
2: IMPORTANT: Train a militia security force to an adequate standard.
3: ROUTINE: Ensure the majority of the workers do not quit.
4: ROUTINE: Realise there are insiders and take steps to eliminate them.
5: ROUTINE: Capture the insiders rather than causing them to flee.

A maximum TSI score of 13 is possible for this mission. Success or failure is clearly defined by whether there is anything left of the installation and who owns it at the end of the fight. The direct attack on the plant is a clear sign of escalation in the dispute between the two Suntori legacy companies and will probably lead to retaliation.

ADMINISTERING TARGET HARDENING

Rallying and training the workers can be abstracted with a couple of checks but it is not preferable for a mercenary campaign to fall into this pattern. The Travellers may want to gloss over the non-combat part of the ticket and get on to the big fight at the end. The Referee should not permit this; part of the adventure is solving different problems. Instead, the Travellers should come up with a plan for the training and experience its implementation.

'Press X to realise there are infiltrators within the workforce' is not a great way to run a mercenary campaign either. It is much more satisfying for the Travellers to come to the realisation themselves rather than as the result of an abstracted dice roll. Likewise, planning how to locate and capture the infiltrators is part of the experience and should be played out unless there is a pressing reason not to.

The attackers' equipment should be tailored to cause the Travellers some problems. In a straight infantry fight the odds are stacked in their favour as the defenders but their plans should be upended by some unexpected difficulty. This might be the tank mentioned above or some other threat but whatever the Referee decides should force the Travellers to think fast and take decisive action. A mercenary campaign is about the decisions the Travellers make, not stacking the odds in abstract combat resolution checks.

CHAPTER-FIVE

COMPANY TICKETS

The following tickets are intended for a company-sized force. The majority of mercenary units are in this category and larger formations often detach a company to take on a suitable ticket.

THE WAR ON WESTERLEA

Warfighter, Company. Cr750000 initial, ongoing.

The Cease Warmongering! movement has been gaining strength on Westerlea in recent months. Governmental control over rural areas is patchy at best and insurgents are consolidating popular support in areas where they are able to operate as they please. Government forces have suffered numerous setbacks trying to retake these areas, possibly due to leaked information on forthcoming operations.

The government of Westerlea is offering Cr750000 for a company-sized unit to commence ongoing warfighting operations in the target region. It is expected that the contract will run for several months, with a fee of Cr400000 per month after the first. This is offered on a 'thin ticket' basis, with the mercenaries operating out of a government base and receiving supplies from government stockpiles. Operations will consist of sweeps to clear insurgents from designated sectors and keep them clear whilst the authorities restore proper control.

The insurgents on Westerlea are equipped with a mix of civilian small arms and captured TL7 military equipment. They have few artillery pieces or armoured vehicles, relying on technicals armed with light support weapons for mobile firepower. The world's military forces are much better equipped, although at a similar tech level. They are demoralised as a result of repeated setbacks and the effects of a long asymmetric conflict in which casualties have steadily been mounting.

Referee's Information

The situation is actually worse than the local government believes. Some officials in the military and civilian administration have been suborned and are considering going over to the insurgents. In the meantime they have been providing information to the CW! movement which has caused several major operations to fail. There is a real possibility that the current government will not survive the next round of elections which are due in just a few months.

Warfighting on Westerlea

As is common in an ongoing contract, the mercenaries will be expected to carry out missions as directed by the client rather than one specific task agreed upon beforehand. There is a certain amount of negotiation in these matters, depending on the letter of the contract, but normally the mercenary force has the right to make decisions that concern its personnel as well as a responsibility to provide a suitable service to the client.

The missions required by this contract will be a mix of security sweeps, strikes against insurgent strongholds, patrols and responses to attacks on government facilities or troops. There will be several missions to perform; some planned and some in response to an opportunity or emergency. The exact nature of these missions depends on the decisions made by the Travellers. If they are passive or wait to be spoon-fed the adventure they will find themselves rushing to the aid of local forces that have been ambushed or bitten off more than they can chew… and usually getting there too late.

If the Travellers are proactive and look for ways to hit at the insurgents they are likely to be more successful. The insurgents have become accustomed to knowing what their enemies are up to – and what they are not up to. They are likely to be complacent and lax at first, enabling the Travellers to hit some of their strongholds and catch them by surprise.

In between strikes the Travellers will need to engage in intelligence gathering and patrol sweeps, possibly in conjunction with local forces. They will witness the demoralisation and lack of confidence of governmental forces and may be able to help restore their willingness to fight by providing opportunities to win. If so, the mercenaries will see the character of local forces begin to change – they are not bad soldiers, just weary of a war they are not winning and losing faith in their leaders.

Local forces use typical counterinsurgency formations built around infantry riding in a mix of tracked APCs and lighter but more mobile wheeled vehicles. APCs mount 25mm cannon for fire support, whilst most lighter vehicles have a machinegun or an automatic grenade launcher on a pintle mount. Tanks are available but not normally deployed on counterinsurgency sweeps. On the occasions they have been sent out they have proven ineffective and vulnerable to emplaced explosive devices, although this is mainly a result of the information leaks rather than any deficiency on the part of the vehicles or their crews.

WESTERLEA PLANETARY ARMY COUNTERINSURGENCY FORMATION

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Westerlea Planetary Army Counterinsurgency Formation	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Composite Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Mechanised/Motorised	0
Combat	7	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	2	–2
Support	2	–2
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	5	–1
Reputation	7	0

The insurgents are mostly armed with small arms and light support weapons captured from the planetary army's bases and fire support weapons mounted on light civilian vehicles. The insurgents also possess a few tanks and other armoured vehicles but have few personnel capable of operating them; they are held back in the most important strongholds as a reserve and status symbol. The majority of insurgent forces are light, mobile and inclined to skirmish and retreat if they cannot obtain a clear advantage. Their favourite tactic is to skirmish or raid and to draw out a response force or a pursuit that can be ambushed.

CW! INSURGENTS

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	CW! Insurgents	—
Unit Size	Platoon to Reinforced Company	—
Unit Type	Motorised Light Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Mechanised/Motorised	+4
Combat	7	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	8	0

Investigations

The mercenaries may also be able to find out why the local forces have been so inept of late. Up until around six months ago they were reasonably effective but a series of confused operations led to significant defeats. The army suddenly seemed incapable of bringing the insurgents to action, other than when they got ambushed. Forward bases have been lost, some regions have become no-go areas for anyone connected with the world's administration and efficiency has generally dropped to a huge degree. This sort of thing sometimes happens in a long insurgency but rarely so suddenly.

The mercenaries might consider the drop in effectiveness and morale as a red flag; a sign that the local administration might collapse. They are not entirely wrong in this but there is more to it. Intelligence work or just making the right friends will give the mercenaries access to records of orders going back several months and there is a pattern to be found. Orders given by certain officers are often a little vague and cause dislocations in an operation. There are also some suspicious timings; hostiles choosing to pull out of a position just before it is shelled, or ambushing a supply convoy whose route was changed at the last minute. It will become apparent that there are leaks within the local military and governmental apparatus and the mercenaries may be able to figure out who.

This sort of internal investigation is outside the mercenaries' remit but it may be in their interests to conduct one. Being on the losing side of a war is not good for the unit's reputation and a grateful client is always good for business. If the mercenaries just do their best they will encounter the same problems as the local army; the insurgents know their movements and try to evade or ambush them if possible. If at some point the mercenaries go off-script and 'adjust' (or completely ignore) their orders they will find they have more success. DM-2 applies to all operations and combat carried out in accordance with orders from the government or in cooperation with local forces. If the mercenaries are not exactly where the insurgents have been told they will be, for whatever reason, this negative DM does not apply.

Countermeasures

The insurgents will be alarmed if the mercenaries start to win successes and will try to eliminate them. This is likely to take the form of an ambush. If they have to, the insurgents will try to sucker the mercenaries into a trap using their standard tactic of attacking a vulnerable point to draw out a response force along a predictable route but they may be able to use their control of some officers in the local chain of command to order the mercenary force into danger.

If this is the case, the Travellers will receive orders to make a sweep of a certain area or strike a known insurgent stronghold held by a significant but inferior force – in short, they will be sent to operate against what they think is a weaker force and be ambushed en route or when they arrive. If the Travellers wander blindly into this they will find themselves up against three or more times their number of insurgents, equipped with a suspiciously large amount of support weapons, rocket launchers and the like. When resolving combat against this force it is considered to be more or less battalion-sized, imposing DM-4 on combat resolution in addition to any other ways the insurgents have stacked the deck.

The Travellers can avoid this death trap if they do their own reconnaissance, but may have to explain to their client why they broke off a contracted operation or fled from a mob of ill-armed militia. If they are not suspicious by this point they are likely to take heavy casualties in a series of similar incidents. It is possible they might be able to bull through anyway but it will be a tough ticket.

Counter-Countermeasures

An investigation into which officials are aiding the insurgents will take a long time, especially if they are to be lawfully removed from their positions. The Travellers might circumvent that process by simply eliminating them but this can cause complications – the mercenaries might be sure they have the right suspects who deserve what they are getting but the world government may well see this as usurpation of its authority and an attack on what were at the time still its senior officials.

An alternative is for the mercenaries, with or without the knowledge of their client, to operate outside the local chain of command much of the time, answering only to a small group of trusted officials. False information can be fed to the insurgents by way of the leaks and when they move to counter or evade an operation against them the Travellers' unit will catch them by surprise. It may take some time to set this up and in the meantime the mercenaries will operate against the insurgents as a mobile battle group. Their effectiveness will increase notably since the insurgents think they know what the mercenaries are going to do – and not do – so any contact will be unexpected. The Travellers will receive a positive DM on their first combat resolution once they start doing this. The DM is equal to the score rolled on 1D and reduces by one in each subsequent combat until it reaches zero.

Endgame

Defeating the insurgency will still be a long haul. Conflict will be ongoing for months, or even years, and the Travellers' contract will not be extended that long. There are two ways this ticket can come to an end. If the Travellers do not manage to turn the situation around their client, the world government, will collapse at the next elections in a few months. The contract will be terminated with a bonus of Cr200000 on top of monthly payments and the mercenaries encouraged to get offworld whilst the new regime distances itself from the 'warmongering, mercenary-using and thoroughly corrupt' previous government. Whilst not quite a revolution, the change of regime on Westerlea is an unpleasant business and any unit connected with it may suffer a reduction of its Reputation.

In order for the Travellers to turn the situation around they will need to win notable successes against significant insurgent forces. There are plenty of opportunities to make this happen, from incidental contacts when making a counterinsurgency sweep to targeted raids on strongholds. Any combat that results in a clear win for the Travellers counts as a 'notable success' unless the fight really was a pushover.

The loyal members of the local government can take even a slight victory and use it to restore confidence and public support. Three such wins are sufficient to satisfy the client and instil renewed vigour into the planetary armed forces. The mercenaries will be paid off with a Cr500000 bonus and as they leave Westerlea they will see news reports of more victories won by local forces. This is not uncommon – mercenaries are expensive and often paid off as soon as the locals think they can cope with the situation. The Travellers may want to keep in touch with the government of Westerlea, however. It may not be long before they are needed again.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria. They are more nebulous than is sometimes the case, since the conflict can take many paths.

1: CRITICAL: Defeat an insurgent force of at least company size or capture a significant stronghold.
2: CRITICAL: Win at least three clear victories against the insurgents.
3: IMPORTANT: Determine that the insurgents' recent successes are due to disloyal elements in the government and military.
4: ROUTINE: Do not take more than 5% casualties in any one operation or combat.
5: ROUTINE: Do not suffer an inglorious defeat such as having to flee from an ambush.

With two critical, one important and two routine objectives the maximum TSI score for this ticket is 15. The Travellers could win a famous victory here… but they might end up slinking offworld in disgrace.

ADMINISTERING THE WAR ON WESTERLEA

The War on Westerlea is a large and complex ticket that could be expanded into an entire mini-campaign. The ticket presented here takes the Travellers into the situation, after which their own choices will dictate the course of the adventure. The Travellers might choose to do nothing but make combat patrols through the affected area and hope to wear down the insurgents in whatever contacts occur. At the other end of the scale they may engage in intelligence work against the insurgents and some 'hearts and minds' operations to win over the locals, identifying key targets and then eliminating them with precision. As always, the resolution of the situation depends on interaction between the Referee and the Travellers. The ticket provides a start and end point but the part in between is wide open.

Some Travellers might struggle with an open-ended campaign like this one, especially if they are used to the sort of adventures where they transition from one scripted skill check to the next. The Referee must provide sufficient guidance that the Travellers have had fair warning – they must gather information, make plans and act with initiative. If they fail to realise this is necessary the Travellers might not realise the ticket is slipping away from them; if so they will be puzzled when the government collapses and the ticket is declared a failure. Some Travellers may even protest it is somehow unfair they lost when they are supposed to be the heroes of the story. Fact is, the mercenary sector is not a place for heroes; it requires planning and decision-making of a clinical sort and there are never any guarantees.

AIMING HIGH

Striker, Company. MCr1.5. Success-Only.

The Dureniate Aerospace Defence Installation, better known as Fort Dureniate, was constructed to protect the nearby spaceport from attack. Like many such facilities it has heavy aerospace defences but only a light ground-level security complement. It was never envisaged the fort would be attacked by ground troops without sufficient warning to move ground forces to protect it. Unfortunately that is exactly what happened. It is still not clear how rebel forces got close enough to launch an attack but the small garrison was quickly overwhelmed and the fort has been in rebel hands for some weeks since. The spaceport is effectively out of action, since the planetary government cannot afford to risk civilian ships being fired upon. A ground assault by local forces is entirely possible but the planetary army is primarily a counterinsurgency force and lacks the finesse required to retake the fortress without wrecking the weapons installed there.

The planetary government is offering MCr1.5 on a success-only basis for a company-sized force to regain control of the installation within 10 days of arriving in theatre. The force will have to land elsewhere and travel overland, so grav-mobility is preferred. If the fort is not in government hands within 10 days the operation will be declared a failure and a full-scale assault launched.

The installation is capable of housing several hundred personnel and large numbers of insurgents have been sighted in and around it. Projected opposition is a battalion-sized force, loosely organised and equipped with basic small arms. Some defensive work has been undertaken around the fortress but for the most part this is poorly laid out and only partially finished.

Referee's Information

This is a straightforward striker ticket; seize and objective and hold it until local reinforcements arrive. The estimate of enemy force level is more or less correct, although some support weapons were seized when the fortress was captured and have now been emplaced or issued to bands of insurgents. Automated defences will fire on grav vehicles approaching the fortress unless they stay very low. The largest aerospace weapons cannot target vehicles but there are laser cannon and light missile launchers that can.

The insurgents are using the fort's weapons as a threat, holding the nearby port to ransom. They have only a handful of personnel who can actually operate large aerospace defence weapons and could not defend against a major orbital strike. However, they are quite capable of shooting down a freighter. Similarly, the insurgents holding the fort are loyal to their cause and willing to fight but are loosely organised and will react to any developing situation in a piecemeal fashion.

The Insurgents

The insurgents are equipped with an assortment of small arms from various sources, including a significant amount of weaponry from the captured fort. This is mostly geared to security operations in a fortress environment, such as combat shotguns and submachineguns. A scattering of body armour has been passed out among the insurgents' fighters but remains in short supply. The fortress also has a fair amount of emplaced support weaponry including mortars, autocannon and light laser cannon in addition to its long and short-ranged aerospace defence systems. The characteristics given below do not reflect the capabilities of the fort against starships or high-flying grav vehicles; if the Travellers are foolish enough to try this sort of approach they will be shot out of the sky.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Insurgents at Fort Dureniate	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Motorised Light Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	8	+1
Bombardment	4	–1
Aerospace	10	–1
Support	6	0
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	6	0

The Fort at Dureniate

The fact that the fort is in insurgent hands is deeply humiliating to the planetary authorities and is causing economic problems. Eliminating it in a massive strike is considered a viable option but the cost of rebuilding is prohibitive. Hence authorisation has been given for a striker mission to retake the fortification but with a tight time limit.

The planetary authorities envisage a low-level or ground-level approach followed by a fast assault on the installation. Local forces will be kept out of the loop until the operation starts in case there are treacherous elements that might warn the insurgents. It is thought that the capture of this prestigious installation may have been an inside job; another reason for using mercenaries. The upshot of this is that whilst local forces are holding a cordon around the fort they will not be able to support or relieve the mercenaries for at least three hours. The client may be economical with these facts.

Unknown to the client, the rebel leadership has problems of its own. Capturing the fort was a coup but now a significant body of the rebel force is surrounded in it, running low on supplies and becoming nervous. Internal divisions are appearing and tempers are fraying. A breakout is the best option but this does mean abandoning the fort and thus being seen to have lost it. The only way to salvage anything from the situation is to scuttle the weapons, possibly using warheads from the missiles stored at the fort, and to make an escape. The rebel force is coming around to the idea and has begun setting up demolition charges but lacks experience in such matters and is making slow progress.

If the mercenaries attack promptly they will find the defenders particularly disordered, with some charges planted and some elements of the rebel force ready to make a run for it. A confused situation will ensue, with a horde of converted civilian vehicles dashing away from the fort even whilst other elements are stubbornly fighting for it. If given long enough the rebels will detonate their charges, with mixed effects. Some work, some do not and most of those that do detonate are less destructive than intended. Amid the chaos, the Travellers will need to secure the base, disarm the remaining charges and possibly fend off an attack by the rebel forces that previously fled. Their leaders may be able to bring them back once they realise how small the force is attacking the fort. Amid this chaos, the Travellers need to hold out for at least three hours until relieved.

If the mercenaries drag their feet, the demolition work is likely to be nearly complete. This means parts of the fortress are liable to explode during the fighting. The demolition charges were improvised by people who did not know what they were doing and are a mixed lot. Some are underpowered or do not work at all; others are grossly overkill and will endanger anyone nearby. Control is also rather unreliable. In theory the insurgent commander has a remote detonator that lets him set off some or all of the charges after a short setup period. In fact the process is not that simple and could be interrupted if the Travellers are able to get to the command area in time. There is also the possibility that charges might detonate without being triggered.

The effects of detonating charges will vary from utterly obliterating a weapon and possibly setting off stored missiles nearby to an inefficient explosion dangerous to unprotected personnel nearby but which causes merely cosmetic damage to the target. There is also the possibility that a weapon might be damaged and made unstable, requiring the assault force to fight against a backdrop of collapsing missile launchers and exposed high-tensile orbital defence laser power feeds.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: PARAMOUNT: Take and keep possession of the installation.
2: CRITICAL: Prevent major damage being done to the installation.
3: ROUTINE: Find and disarm at least some of the demolition charges.
4: ROUTINE: Achieve surprise when making the assault.
5: ROUTINE: Avoid altering the rebels by informing local forces of the detailed plan.

One Paramount, one Critical and three Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 15. This can be achieved at once by routine means – maintain operational security, achieve surprise, strike hard and secure the objective thoroughly. A force that makes a good plan to achieve all this is probably destined for success in the long term.

ADMINISTERING AIMING HIGH

This is a straightforward striker mission with a clear objective. The client may not give out all the information they could but smart mercenaries will be able to spot a lack of preparation for an operation in their support. Mercenaries learn not to be too reliant on the client's forces anyway, whether for assistance or in terms of security.

The climax of the adventure will be an intense firefight, which may be very confused. Some elements of the insurgent force may flee early on, only to return just as others are making their escape. Coupled with random explosions and – quite possibly – a confused and piecemeal arrival by local forces who do not have a clear idea what is going on, this could be a memorable fight for all the wrong reasons.

LEARPORT SECURE

Security, Company. Cr300000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

Learport is a private concern on a backwater world, making a modest profit from passing vessels. Its importance has never been great but recently there has been an increase in the amount of ships using the port. Whilst this is good news on the economic front, the reason for this upswing is worrying. A spate of planetary raids by small starships has wrecked other ports in the area and driven shipping onto different routes. It seems likely that Learport will be attacked sooner or later.

The operators or Learport are offering Cr300000 per month plus bonuses for a company-sized unit to secure and defend the port. Some routine security work will be required but the force is to conceal its nature and numbers as far as possible. The primary mission is to drive off attackers using military-level force unavailable to the regular security contingent. If the attackers' ship can be disabled or significant losses inflicted, this would be rewarded with an additional bonus.

The attackers are known to be effective planetary raiders, probably armed with military weapons and possibly equipped with heavy body armour. They may or may not use vehicles. Thus far their method has been to tackle weakly defended sites using groups of three or more small starships. Ground-based weapons are eliminated by shipboard weaponry and an assault

landing is made. Raids are normally over in a few hours, resulting in a disproportionate level of destruction for the loot acquired.

Referee's Information

This is likely to be a lengthy ticket and for that reason the client wants to pay a relatively low monthly fee. They will sweeten this with a hiring bonus of Cr250000, and can be induced to offer more if the mercenaries are persuasive. Eventually, the port will be attacked. If the mercenaries prevent serious destruction they can expect a bonus of Cr250000, increasing to Cr500000 if they do enough damage that the raiders are forced to rethink their operations. In the meantime it is a steady job, which can be good or bad.

Settling In

A long deployment can be boring and lead to skill degradation but at the same time it is an opportunity to conduct training and recover from a previous hard deployment. The Travellers need to be ready to repel an attack with almost no warning but if they plan and manage their force well they can have a contingent ready for instant action at all times and still allow other personnel to rest or catch up on training. The Referee should encourage the Travellers to lay out their plans for routine security, response to incidents at the port and their reaction to an attack. These procedures can be evolved over time and may need to be revised but a mercenary force that fails to plan ahead will have to respond on the fly when the raid begins.

The Travellers will have to deal with some minor incidents over the weeks or even months they spend at Learport and may encounter behaviour that seems much more reasonable when viewed from the other side. In other words, the port will be frequented by small merchant crews who behave like typical Travellers, and the mercenaries are not allowed to shoot them or beat them up without good reason. There may be incidental adventures such as a band of chancers trying to rob the starport bank or a ship that needs repossessing. The referee should ensure the Travellers have time to establish a routine and perhaps become complacent. They cannot predict when the attack will happen, so will have to simply react when it does.

The Raiders

If the Travellers have taken effective measures to conceal their numbers and possibly their presence, the raiders will still know security has been beefed up but remain unaware of the extent. If the Travellers are careless their opponents will be better prepared. The attack will be more like a fair fight than a trap for the raiders.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Planetary Raiders	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Infantry	–3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	5	–1
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	6	0

The raiders have established an effective method of taking installations such as Learport. They have three starships and will use one of them to reconnoitre the target ahead of time. They also collect data from independent ships – by means of gossip, bribery or intimidation – about the defences of nearby spaceports. These innocent-seeming ships pass through the port and report back. Information will be at least a couple of weeks out of date, often more, but the overall picture built up by the raiders allows them to select good targets and avoid those where the risk to reward ratio is not in their favour.

Once a target is selected, the assault is prepared by an advance force landed ahead of time if possible. These are personnel dropped off at the port during a final reconnaissance. In some cases the vessel remains at the port until its companions arrive, sending a coded go/no-go signal to trigger the operation or recalling personnel for extraction. In some cases the vessel will take off and act as if it is intending to jump out of the system or may remain in place as a forward-deployed asset.

Weakly defended targets are attacked by simply landing the ships at the port and overrunning the defences. If there are aerospace weapons present it is necessary to make a fast approach, coming in low and using terrain to conceal the vessels. The raiding force will already have the port's aerospace defence weapons targeted and can take them out almost immediately when there is a clear line of sight. The ships then land and disgorge the attacking force.

The raiders' advance party will cause mayhem as a distraction, attempting to neutralise any command facilities they can get at, while the ships disgorge about 50 ground-combat personnel. At the Referee's discretion – perhaps if the Travellers' presence has been discovered – the raiders may have some combat armour or even a light grav tank or two. Their force is easy enough to roll over a typical starport security force but if the Travellers can get organised and fight back the battle may go badly for the raiders.

The Attack

If they are complacent and do not have a set of procedures in place, the Travellers will be caught by surprise and will be still trying to get organised whilst the attackers are in the port. If they do specify workable procedures, the Travellers might spot some warning signs in the days ahead of the attack or in the last moments before it unfolds. If so, they still have a fight on their hands.

The attackers are likely to be able to disable the port's defensive anti-starship weapons and can turn starship-grade lasers on vehicles or personnel caught in the open. Their assault is rapid and well-coordinated, with a diversion from troops on the ground and a strike at command centres. The Travellers will have to figure out what is going on in the middle of a very confused situation. If they do, they will be able to repel the attackers but may not be able to stop them from retreating in good order – and maybe shooting the port up in retaliation. An ideal outcome is for the Travellers' force to ambush the attackers and inflict heavy casualties on them, perhaps taking one of their ships. This will require good coordination and a plan in place before the attack begins.

ADMINISTERING LEARPORT SECURE

This ticket has the potential to run for some time and if the Travellers are enjoying dealing with the oddball problems of a backwater starport this can be played out in detail. After a period of mundane activity the adventure builds to a climax with the raiders' attack. The Referee should give alert and conscientious Travellers a chance to spot the advance party but once the attack begins the raiders will strike hard and fast. The climax of the adventure will be a vicious firefight in the port, with civilians and outmatched local security personnel caught in the middle.

Although the Travellers have an advantage as the defenders and have a powerful force at their disposal, this situation is no pushover. The mercenaries may not be able to commit their whole force, either because it is unprepared or because they do not know exactly what is happening. The Referee is entirely free to exploit every trick the Travellers would use if they were making the raid, maximising the advantages of surprise and confusion to offset the firepower ranged against them.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: CRITICAL: Repel the attack without suffering serious damage to the port.
2: IMPORTANT: Inflict serious losses on the attackers.
3: ROUTINE: Detect the advance party and prevent them disabling the port's command facilities.
4: ROUTINE: Maintain operational effectiveness over a long deployment.
5: ROUTINE: Deal with whatever incidental issues arise during the deployment.

One Critical, one Important and three Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 13. To achieve this the Travellers will need to do a decent job as portside security whilst concealing their exact numbers, sucker the attackers into fully committing and then hitting them hard. A barely successful defence that allows the raiders to break off and escape will not impress the client.

REFORM AND MODERNISATION

Cadre, Company. Cr500000 per month. Ongoing.

The Cemmbiner Republic recently undertook a major defence review, which was conducted by offworld experts. The review exposed a shocking level of grift and cronyism within the senior echelons of the armed forces. The ensuing major reorganisation has left the republic's military in chaos, with the reality of its low training and preparedness levels only now becoming apparent.

The Cemmbiner Republic is offering Cr500000 per month for a company-sized force to provide training and guidance to a segment of its armed forces. This is a 'train the trainers' operation, after which the personnel will return to their units and share their experience.

No combat is expected.

Referee's Information

The Cemmbiner Republic is paying over the odds because it has a distorted picture of what military operations and services cost. The recent review resulted in a purge of senior officers and criminal proceedings against some of them. The entire force has been disrupted but its condition is not much worse than before. A practice of falsifying documentation and staging exercises to cover defects has left the military demoralised and incompetent.

The plan is to create a roughly battalion-sized force with personnel from many different units, train it up and run it through exercises. When personnel go back to their unit they will spread their experience and take improved skills back with them. Thus one formation gets a greatly improved captain, another a group of ordinary soldiers, and the improvement ripples out through the military as a whole.

In theory this is a reasonable idea but it is more likely the improved personnel will be swallowed up by the mass of military forces and nothing will change. Certainly the process is going to be slow and painful even if it is not interrupted by disaster. This is the point where the cadre ticket takes a sharp left turn and becomes a fight for survival.

The republic's army is equipped – it might be better to say under-equipped – to TL9. Most vehicles are wheeled, with only a few grav platforms. These are far more likely to be in service with the so-called elite formations protecting the top brass or under their direct control than with ordinary field formations. There are a handful of light grav tanks and a few

CEMMBINER TRAINING BATTALION

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Cemmbiner Training Battalion	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Infantry with supporting units	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	–3
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	2	–2
Aerospace	2	–2
Support	4	–2
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	5	–1
Reputation	6	0

grav APCs but they are more status symbols than warfighting weapons. Combat formations make do with wheeled vehicles and the occasional air/raft for liaison and observation purposes.

Like most planetary armies, that of the Cemmbiner Republic has not fought a war in decades. Doctrine is standard, based around mobile formations made up of motorised infantry backed up by light armoured vehicles. The aerospace defence sector gets the lion's share of the budget or did until the recent review. It is not uncommon for aerospace forces to have a large budget as they are essential to the protection of a world, but in this case the commander has built an empire that subsumes some other functions of the defence sector. This was partially accomplished by overspending on some impressive defensive systems and partly by internal politics and vicious political manoeuvring.

The commander of the aerospace forces has been dismissed from her post and is awaiting trial for misappropriation of funds but retains considerable support – not all of it voluntary. The grav vehicle contingent of the planetary army is mostly assigned to the 'security of the aerospace defence bases' role but in practice has become an internal political instrument loyal to the aerospace commander. Its assets have not yet been reassigned to ground combat formations.

Initial Efforts

Upon arriving the Travellers are assigned a base of operations that was clearly intended for a larger force than currently deployed. All personnel not involved in the cadre assignment, other than essential maintenance and administrative staff, have been redeployed elsewhere. Some of these units are undertaking training without offworld assistance or undergoing reorganisation at their new bases.

What the Travellers are faced with is a composite force a little more than a battalion strong, formed mostly of infantry but with contingents from armoured, air defence and artillery formations. Drawn from a demoralised and often neglected military, formed on the fly and not properly constituted, this force can best be described as a shambles. The Travellers are likely to be appalled at the state of the training unit but this is only the beginning of their problems.

The Travellers will face an additional issue from the internal culture of the military. Problems are covered up or blamed on someone else rather than being tackled, for fear of displeasure from above. Assurances are worthless as a result of years of sleazy and untrustworthy behaviour of many senior officers. On top of all that, the removal of those senior officers has led to a round of promotions. Some of the new top brass are reasonably honest but have not received training for their new role; others may or may not have the same problem but are also looking forward to a career spent skimming the military budget like their predecessors. Junior officers are more honest as a rule, not having benefited from their superiors' grift but afraid to draw attention to themselves. A culture of risk-aversion and blame deflection stands in the way of real progress.

The Travellers will have to retrain personnel who have learned to care only about not being caught screwing up and will have to unsnarl the tangled chain of blame and recrimination leading back to any incident's cause. This will be slow and frustrating work, making the government's relatively generous pay offer seem too low. The unit's starting status reflects this culture, along with serious equipment deficiencies caused by budget skimming and outright theft.

Some of the problems can be identified by a thorough audit of equipment, skills and personnel. This will indicate that much of the force's 'paper' allocation of equipment was missing long before it was formed and when its constituent sub-units came to this base they were under-allocated again. This suggests the commanders of the units that contributed personnel have taken the opportunity to write off some of their equipment shortfall by claiming it was sent with the detachment. Missing gear can be attributed to mishaps during the move or perhaps misappropriation by the mercenaries.

Skills are lacking, too. In some cases personnel have officially passed qualification courses for their duties despite never actually attending one or have received shoddy training. This will be obvious from observing them on exercise, although personnel are highly unlikely to admit they are aware of a problem. Many will straight-out lie and say they have been through the courses and they were satisfactory, although they will be vague on the details and can be caught in their lies if they say too much. Most of those doing this are not bad people, they are just afraid of what might happen to them if they are candid about the corrupt internal workings of the army.

Once the Travellers realise how bad the deficiencies in equipment and skills are they can see how to pitch the training and what they have to work with. Some problems can be resolved by properly reorganising the force and putting people where they can be most useful, along with carrying out simple exercises to shake down the training battalion into something resembling working order.

Ongoing Training

The Travellers' mission is not a simple or quick one. Equipment deficiencies must be made good somehow but this requires obtaining funds and demonstrating a need. The higher echelons of the military know all about the grift that has created the situation but cannot be sure requests for additional weaponry are not more of the same. Even if requisitions are granted the shipments may be skimmed either by profiteers or other unit commanders that want to make good their own hardware deficiencies.

The Travellers could get additional equipment by making a case to the military's political masters, which will require negotiation and persuasion. They might end up having to do it all again, harder this time, if their shipment is intercepted or stolen. Alternatively, they might steal from other units, falsify requisitions or otherwise join the orgy of grift and scrounging that is the Cemmbiner Republic's supply chain.

Training is a matter for the Travellers. The force is desperately in need of basic small-unit training to improve battlefield skills and junior leadership and ammunition to conduct marksmanship training. Officers at all levels are used to being told exactly what to do in an exercise, down to the 'at this point you will be ambushed and your unit will retire in disorder' level. Many will flounder upon having to give meaningful orders in a fluid situation, either because they really do not know how to lead or because they are afraid to commit to an action.

Debriefings are an exercise in vagueness and blame deflection but if carefully handled it may be possible to show the officers that the mercenaries are aware of what really happened and that they will not be punished for admitting mistakes providing they learn from them. Subsequent exercises are likely to involve a lot of ham-fisted and amateurish attempts to do what a properly trained officer would have no problem with but now and then moments of competence will shine through. Improvement will be gradual at first then rapid as the force gains confidence in itself and its trainers. The Travellers might even see glimmerings of professional pride.

The Travellers will have to deal with visits from newly appointed top brass, some of whom will feel the need to demonstrate how important they are by criticising the mercenaries' work. Some are obviously corrupt and want to do deals with the mercenaries and some are clearly just struggling with their new roles. Diplomacy will be necessary if the Travellers do not want to make enemies.

The Coup Attempt

Over time the training battalion's efficiency should rise and the worst equipment deficiencies will be ironed out. Some personnel will rotate out and be replaced, which in theory should increase the capabilities of the army overall. However, this will be a slow process; it is more likely the good work they have done will be lost amid the general apathy of the military establishment. Before this can become apparent, events overtake the training battalion.

Some of the dispossessed generals still have considerable support – mainly from those who stand to lose out under the new and less corrupt administration. A segment of the army is willing to follow its old generals for various reasons and this has been augmented by a battalion-sized mercenary unit hired by arms brokers who liked things as they were. Only the lead elements of this force are as yet on-planet, as its arrival would be suspicious, but they are enough to take control of the downport when the time is right.

What follows is an attempt at a military coup. Most of the military is not in on it, but the old commanders have managed to put together a spearhead force with which to seize the capital. Their plan is to take control of the seat of government and 'suspend' the civilian government, which they will claim is acting under the influence of foreign mercenaries. Meanwhile their own mercenary force will take control of the starport and use it as a base of operations. They hope the army will come out in their support or at least stay in barracks until the confusion subsides. In this they are mistaken.

The Travellers may or may not hear about the arrival of a new mercenary unit at the starport. At present this is nothing more than the 'headquarters and security contingent' of a TL10 light infantry force. Investigation shows it is oversized for a security contingent, looking more like a combat company than a few guards for senior officers. This may ring alarm bells and the Travellers can gain more information if they try hard enough. Nobody will reveal the mercenaries' real mission but there are documents at army HQ that indicate its senior personnel are on-planet to discuss a long-term defensive deployment. This seems to be at odds with the attempt to raise the standard of the existing forces but it is a cover story with enough substance to resist initial inquiries at least.

The takeover of the downport is accomplished by the mercenary company, officially 'assisting by local forces measures to secure the port in the present emergency'. In fact the mercenaries do the work and the small local army force present – and illegally so – simply struts in and starts making declarations about an attack by insurgents. The port is quickly in the hands of the mercenaries, whose main force is due to land in a few days.

In the meantime the coup is launched and it goes wrong from the start. This is mainly due to the incompetence of the army the commanders were skimming from. Units begin deploying to fight for or against the coup, also in total confusion. The result is a set of scrappy encounters in which mutual ignorance creates a lottery-like situation. At the head of a semi-trained provisional battalion, the Travellers wield the only serious fighting force loyal to the government.

Defeating a coup is not within the Travellers' remit but they might be in trouble if the coup succeeds as they are part of the process that ejected corrupt commanders from their posts. Besides, those members of the government not captured in the initial descent on the capital are soon in touch asking the mercenaries to help them resist. They are willing to pay, of course, but will initially try to talk the mercenaries into it by pointing out the danger they face if the coup succeeds.

Governmental Response

The mercenary force at the starport will not be able to commence operations outside it for a few days as it needs to consolidate its hold over the installation and set up its heavy equipment. Detachments might be available but the Travellers should not face a major offworld force during the critical part of the conflict. That is in the next few days, during which the world's remaining forces and most of the population will gradually drift into supporting or accepting whichever side is winning.

This means that the Travellers have just a few days to respond to the situation. After that control of the capital and starport will be cemented and the coup will be successful. A determined counterattack might actually succeed but even if it does not there is a chance the populace and undecided parts of the military might rally behind the mercenaries. If all else fails the Travellers might be best off surrendering to the mercenaries at the starport. Professional courtesy might be enough to get them off planet before the coup leaders think of pinning the blame on them for subverting the government.

If the Travellers decide to fight, they will find the capital a scene of confused street fighting, with no clear picture of who controls what. The grav vehicle contingent will be committed by the generals, in the hope that it can act as a hammer to crush resistance but their own activities have ensured the tanks are poorly maintained and crewed by incompetents – however politically reliable and loyal they may be. Above all, both sides are poorly led.

The fight for the capital is the decisive moment of the coup and one in which the Travellers can make a real difference. They are likely to become involved in street fighting for strategic objectives or attempts to fend off ham-fisted strikes by badly operated grav tanks.

Their leadership and tactics will decide the fate of the capital and therefore the world. If the coup fails at the capital the mercenaries at the port will activate their repatriation clause, declare themselves neutral and just leave. Thus the defeat of the grav vehicle contingent is likely to be the pivotal moment of the battle.

COUP FORCES GRAV CONTINGENT

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Coup Forces Grav Contingent	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Composite Lift Infantry and Armoured	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	2	–2
Aerospace	5	–1
Support	5	–1
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	5	–1

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: PARAMOUNT: Prevent the coup from succeeding.
2: IMPORTANT: Provide meaningful training that creates an effective unit.
3: IMPORTANT: Either win in the field or get offworld before the new regime acts against you.
4: ROUTINE: Arrange a training programme for the local forces.
5: ROUTINE: Inspire the local forces to follow you into action against the coup attempt.

One Paramount, two Important and two Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 15. Note that some objectives relate to the mission as planned and others to the situation as it plays out. It is not possible, for example, to deduce objective 1 from the brief at the beginning of this ticket.

ADMINISTERING REFORM AND MODERNISATION

This ticket is an example of how a mission can deviate enormously from the original brief. The Travellers are hired to provide training, drawing them into a situation where they have to fight to survive. The coup is sudden and unexpected by the locals but the Travellers might realise something is happening just before the launch. This could occur if some of the personnel under training are suspiciously absent. Capturing one will allow the Travellers to interrogate them and learn what is about to happen. This can lead to an alternative version of the adventure, in which the Travellers gain enough warning to lead their training battalion into battle as the coup is launched. The end result is much the same, with the Travellers and their troops fighting in the streets of the capital against the much more numerous but utterly disordered followers of the coup.

CHAPTER - SIX

BATTALION TICKETS

Battalion-sized units are the largest commonly encountered in the mercenary marketplace. Some battalion-sized units detach companies and platoons to carry out the actual missions and are essentially an administrative formation. In such cases, the force – or part of it – can take on tickets intended for smaller units. The following tickets are aimed at battalion-sized units that operate on a single deployment.

WHOLE CLOTH

Cadre, Battalion. MCr1.5 monthly plus bonus, ongoing. The Minnent is an alliance of small states lying along the Minnent river on Merrain. Until recently it has seen little need for significant military forces and has relied on ad-hoc unilateral operations to deal with such threats as they emerged. It has recently become desirable to raise a joint force to serve the alliance as a whole, acting as a deterrent to foreign aggression and a means to secure the Minnent Basin against banditry and lawlessness.

The Minnent is offering MCr1.5 per month, plus limited support and suitable basing, for a battalion-sized formation to train and lead the Joint Defence Force. The contract will initially run for six months, with a MCr1 hiring bonus and a similar bonus upon satisfactory completion of the contract.

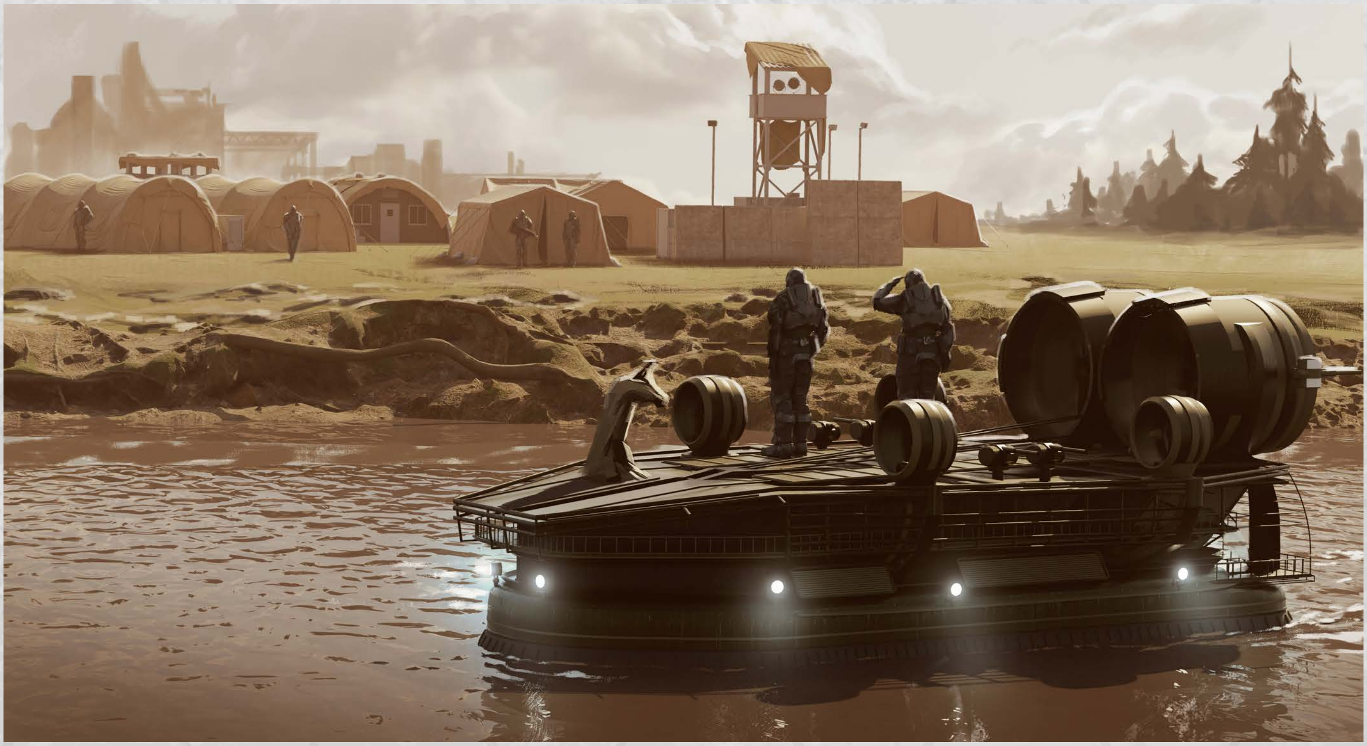
Level of risk is expected to be low, although minor operations against criminal gangs are possible from time-to-time.

Referee's Information

The offer is above-board and truthful, at least as far as the client is aware. The Joint Defence Force is to comprise a brigade-sized combined-arms formation and three independent battalions plus several 'patrol companies' that will use and operate from rivercraft. This force is being raised from scratch and contains only a few personnel seconded from the states' own small armed forces.

Camp Arben

Since none of the Minnent states has the facilities to train so many personnel, a base is being constructed. Named Camp Arben, this facility is supposed to be finished by the time the mercenaries arrive. Unfortunately, it is anything but. A small civilian



contractor team is being assisted – if that is the right word – by a couple of hundred recruits who should be receiving their basic training by now. Few of the facilities are finished, most are nothing more than foundations and critical materials have yet to arrive. The mercenaries can expect hundreds more recruits within days of their arrival and they need somewhere to live even before training begins.

This will be the mercenaries' first problem. The handful of more experienced personnel have managed to create a roster whereby everyone has a place to sleep in the tents and handful of semi-completed buildings but only by rotating them through strict shifts. There is plenty of food but little capability to cook it, so the personnel are eating cold rations wherever they happen to be when the food is issued. The recruits are miserable, cold and tired, and many have already attempted to desert. Few get far and at present the camp's official and self-appointed leaders have turned a blind eye to the fact that those who are caught and returned – or who wander back in after failing to reach civilisation – should face stiff penalties. Those that manage to get to nearby towns may be arrested by their law enforcement personnel and returned but in many cases, have been fed and assisted by sympathetic locals.

The Travellers will need to solve this problem and quickly. Most of the recruits can be easily directed towards assisting in an organised building and setup plan if there is one – it is in their interests to get buildings to sleep in built after all. The mercenaries will need to solve planning and administrative problems, after which it is simply a matter of pointing work gangs at tasks that need doing. This part of the task is urgent but fairly straightforward.

Once buildings start going up, it becomes possible to stow equipment properly, provide hot meals and showers and get the camp functioning as it was intended. Training can begin before work is finished, at least in a basic way. Teams of recruits will learn to work together putting the roof on their barracks or peeling spuds for dinner and should be able to see the benefits of mutual assistance. Most formal military training will require the construction of firing ranges and similar facilities but these can be put into operation in phases as the living-area work comes to a close. It is possible that in just days or perhaps a week or two the mercenaries will have something resembling a proper training camp and can start work on shaping their recruits.

Equipment is not a problem. At least, lack of equipment is not. The camp receives deliveries of equipment and weaponry daily but since the local states do not have a great deal of transportation available it arrives in small mixed loads – and at first there is nowhere to store it all. When the mercenaries arrive, vehicles for the combined-arms force are parked wherever they stopped and several heavily armed corvettes are moored in the centre of the river with no dock available. The mercenaries will need to sort all this out – or show the locals how to do so – before their training ticket can begin.

Forming the Brigade

The recruits themselves are willing enough but for the most part completely untrained. They are the product of a generally peaceable society and do not really grasp the rather permanent consequences that can arise from poor decisions or sloppy execution. With patience and good example these people can be turned into effective soldiers but the mercenaries are likely to be tearing their hair out before long.

The largest force fielded by the states of the Minnent to date has been a composite battalion. The officers assigned to command the new brigade are familiar with the principles of their task but they have no experience of operating at this scale. The brigade is to comprise three combined-arms battalions using a family of wheeled TL8 armoured cars. Some are configured as APCs, some as fire support vehicles and others as artillery mounts. Additional similar vehicles are set up as field ambulances and logistics assets. In addition the brigade has a fourth battalion organised as a support and command unit. This includes a field workshop for the vehicles, additional artillery, a command post and a security element for it.

The independent battalions are organised similarly to those in the brigade, whilst the patrol companies are divided between riverine and conventional forces. Patrol companies are intended to operate independently. They are mostly equipped with light vehicles; many of them civilian SUVs painted green. Riverine units crew small maritime corvettes equipped with support weapons. These have been rather hurriedly rushed into service but are actually quite well made by experienced shipbuilders.

Once the mercenaries get the recruits organised and give them somewhere to sleep, training can begin. As noted, this may be painfully slow. One particular weakness is in command and control – some of the so-called officers assigned to these units were civilians a month ago and simply do not know what they are doing. The mercenaries will need to show them how to both be and to lead soldiers, without undermining them. Leaders may have emerged from the chaos of the camp construction phase. The planetary authorities can be persuaded to grant rank to those recommended by the mercenaries but whilst they may have raw leadership ability they are not trained officers.

The mercenaries' best approach, at least in terms of getting a force into the field as quickly as possible, is to find out what skills and experience the recruits have from civilian life and harness those as best they can. Most of the recruits are young people with a decent education but few practical skills, although there are administrators, drivers and potential logistics experts among them. Keeping a small-town grocery store stocked is not quite the same as ensuring a military brigade gets enough rations and ammunition but it is a starting point at least.

Basic small arms handling and the like can be taught under quite primitive conditions and small-unit tactics training can begin quickly. This in turn feeds into field leadership training of a sort. Thus a force capable of fighting can be cobbled together reasonably quickly. More advanced skills such as operating the corvettes or maintaining proper signals protocol will be much harder to teach and the Travellers do not have much time.

Fielding a Force

Despite the fact that most armies require several months to train recruits to a basic level – and that assumes they will be joining an existing formation – the client will begin pushing for operational deployments within two weeks of beginning training. The force is obviously nowhere near ready at this point and may not even have a completed base but the client is unlikely to accept that. The client begins pushing for an operational deployment two weeks in and moves to not-quite demanding it after four weeks. If the Travellers put a formation of company size or so into the field within the four weeks after this, the client will be satisfied for a while. They will expect multiple forces capable of conducting field operations within 12–16 weeks of beginning training and for the whole force to be deployable at 24 weeks. This is achievable but the units put into the field will be under-trained and prone to making mistakes even in straightforward situations.

The client can be pacified by diplomacy and a demonstration of progress but ultimately wants a field force in an unreasonably short time. One way to satisfy this requirement might be to put together a small 'field training detachment' from the least-worst of the recruits and carry out some patrols using this. Personnel can then be rotated through this detachment and gain field experience. This is workable but risky.

Opposition

Any forces fielded by the mercenaries will come up against some opposition. The Minnent region has many independent communities, some of which are controlled by criminal groups. Cultivation of plants that can be used to make illegal drugs is quite common in areas around certain tributaries, which are characterised by poor land access and thick mangrove-like terrain. The groups controlling these areas are armed, mostly with civilian weapons, and know the waterways well. They have been successful in the past at repelling intrusions by the security forces – one reason for raising the new formations – and they will attempt to ambush patrols or resist incursions.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Armed Criminals	—
Unit Size	Platoon or Smaller	—
Unit Type	Armed band	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	2	–2
Aerospace	5	–1
Support	5	–1
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	5	–1

The mercenaries will have to deal with the criminals, either by themselves or with the assistance of the forces they are training. The difficulty here is one of leading inept local forces in such a way that they can defeat the enemy and not be humiliated by needing rescue. Mercenaries who breeze through a situation that has just caused a local company to scatter in panic are underlining the inadequacy of the locals and may be resented for it.

In all likelihood the training will be interspersed with a series of small-scale clashes. Water transport or infiltration through the mangrove swamp will give access to some communities; others can be readily reached overland. If the Travellers are patient with the population they will find many communities that dislike the criminals or are victimised by them but can do little about it. Sweeping the area can only do so much; the criminals will come back. The answer is of course to do what the Travellers were hired for – create a force capable of securing the region and show it how to make that happen.

Along the way there will be incidents and potential disasters. Communities may request detachments of troops to protect them but this creates problems regarding logistics and the possibility of an inexperienced force causing a tragedy. The Travellers will have to pick their way through this minefield of incompetence as they train up their charges into a competent force.

There is a limit to what can be achieved in six months with completely raw recruits, especially when juggling the demands of a client who expects an elite force in the field within a few weeks. Successful operations against the criminal gangs will go a long way towards client satisfaction, especially if the local forces are coached into putting on a good performance. If the Travellers think to put on a bit of a show at the end of the contract this will also help. A parade is unlikely to go all that well unless the Travellers have been concentrating too much on drill and not enough on combat soldiering but a staged exercise or even a successful operation involving a range of sub-units will impress the client.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: CRITICAL: Do not suffer a serious defeat at the hands of criminal gangs.
2: CRITICAL: Demonstrate that a competent fighting force has been created.
3: ROUTINE: Be seen to provide good training and leadership.
4: ROUTINE: Sort out the mess at Camp Arben.
5: ROUTINE: Get a force of some kind into the field by week 8 and demonstrate competence.

Two Critical and three Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 14. To achieve this the Travellers will need to make steady progress and balance the demands of the client against the realities of the situation. A force that sallies out and meets disaster will undermine all other successes. Payment of the end-of-contract bonus depends on achieving a generally positive outcome, as evidenced by a TSI of 7+.

ADMINISTERING WHOLE CLOTH

This is a six-month deployment with a variety of missions to carry out along the way. It could be completely abstracted but a campaign where months of potential adventuring is glossed over in a couple of checks is perhaps missing the point of the game. It would be reasonable to use abstract resolution for the training and organisational side of the ticket, with checks made every few weeks to determine progress. This would be counterpointed by incidents in the field, sudden visits by local dignitaries and similar problems requiring some hands-on roleplaying.

A series of encounters with the criminal gangs, not all of them planned, will allow the Travellers to see how much success they are achieving. If the Travellers want to come out of this contract with a good success record they will need to generate their own missions. These include intelligence gathering, meeting with local communities to offer support and assistance, raids against criminal strongholds and possibly clashes with the larger gangs. A proactive mercenary force can lead elements of their brigade in small victories that build confidence and allow personnel to gain experience. Given the short time frame, the brigade will still be weak in some areas but the Travellers will have set it upon the right path.

TIP OF THE SPEAR

Striker, Battalion. MCr7.5 plus bonus.

The Merrain Federation has long endured the provocations and sometimes aggression of its neighbours. A series of police actions and defensive retaliations has unfortunately not dissuaded certain nearby states from carrying out acts of violence against its citizens. It has unfortunately become necessary to deal with a particularly threatening nearby state but the forces of the Federation are presently deployed elsewhere.

The Merrain Federation is offering MCr7.5 for a battalion-sized unit to make a strike against the city of Olrain. Olrain is main maritime port of the Danneba Republic, a small state known for its support of international piracy and attacks on shipping. The mercenary force will take control of the docks and destroy their key facilities, rendering the port useless until rebuilt. It is envisaged that this will greatly reduce the incidence of pirate attacks and coastal raiding by removing the raiders' port of choice.

Resistance can be expected from the armed forces of Danneba, although they are based elsewhere and will take time to arrive. An unknown number of pirates and raiders are thought to be in the port, equipped with whatever small arms they have managed to steal or otherwise acquire.

Referee's Information

Some of the mission brief is sort of true-ish. There have been hijackings and raids over the years and a pirated ship once made port in Olrain. The Merrain Federation has, as usual, grossly inflated and misrepresented the situation in order to create a pretext for an attack. Its intention, depending on what the Danneba Republic does, is to either wreck its economy and begin exerting influence through a loaded assistance package or to provoke a war the Republic simply cannot win. The Federation is a democratic state and needs to give its voters a pretext – however thin – for its conquests.

Strategic Situation

The Danneban Republic has been monitoring the indignant noises emanating from Federation news channels every time a ship strays off course and suspects something is afoot. It has quietly moved a defensive force into the city. This is a reinforced battalion, composed of infantry with a few armoured vehicles and artillery in support. It is equipped to local TL7 standards and inexperienced. There are no heavily armed pirates in the city but a scattering of ship's crews and law enforcement officers might try to put up a fight.

The Danneban military is modest in terms of capability and size, being mostly formed of independent infantry battalions supported by light armoured and artillery companies. Infantry are provided with unarmoured trucks for mobility and have few heavy support weapons, although adding an artillery and/or armoured company to a battalion creates a fairly potent all-arms battlegroup.

One such battlegroup is deployed at Olrain. The armoured company has cheap four-wheeled armoured cars mounting a mix of 25mm autocannon and 50mm cannon, which pose a slight threat to light armoured vehicles. Artillery is limited to a composite mortar/light aerospace defence company equipped with multi-mounted autocannon and low-quality post-launched anti-aircraft missiles. Three infantry companies are deployed at key points in the city and are constructing hasty fortifications. The artillery/aerospace contingent, along with the infantry battalion headquarters and support formation, is deployed in a warehouse complex near the docks. The armoured force is also based there but is intended to make aggressive counterattacks against intruders.

DANNEBAN DEFENCE FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Danneban Defence Force	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Battalion	—
Unit Type	Combined-Arms Battlegroup	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	0
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	3	–1
Aerospace	2	–2
Support	3	–2
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	8	0

The key to the defences is a fort the Dannebans have begun constructing. Although far from finished it will provide the defenders with some advantages. At present the fort consists of a complex of small bunkers linked by concreted trenches, surrounding a half-built strongpoint covering the main road approach to the city. The fortress itself is not manned as it is only part-built but has an infantry platoon assigned for security. The part-built fortifications could be manned by an infantry company with sufficient warning, creating a significant obstacle. When completed the fort will be a Constructed position giving DM+8 on combat resolution but in its present condition it is worth only DM+5.

The client has neglected to mention this obstacle, not least because its intelligence work has been very sketchy. If the Travellers conduct any meaningful pre-strike reconnaissance they will become aware of the fort and a proper recon or intel operation reveals it is far closer to being operational than expected. The central command area is nothing but a skeleton, although there are powered emplacements for a pair of 200mm howitzers and a ring of anti-aerospace and anti-armour weapons. These have been rushed into operational status and are glitchy but functional and crews are available for them.

The Danneban plan is to use the fort as a pivot for manoeuvres by the armoured force. Its security contingent can be augmented by an infantry company if there is warning of an attack. Its primary purpose is to engage armoured ground forces approaching the city and for this purpose it has bunker-mounted cannon capable of endangering local armoured vehicles. The howitzers are a secondary capability intended to prevent the fort from being pounded into unserviceability by enemy artillery but are capable of engaging ground targets in the direct-fire role if necessary. They are very powerful but hugely inaccurate in this role.

The Strike

The mercenary force is not expected to take and hold the city or its docks. Quite the opposite, in fact. The Federation is making this attack in order to create a legal-ish precedent for further action and does not want to be seen as a conqueror at this time. The mercenaries are thus expected to grab the target, smash up the dock facilities or otherwise render them useless and retire before significant resistance materialises.

If the mercenaries manage to achieve surprise they will find the defenders almost completely unprepared. Training levels are low and the Danneban troops are likely to fall into confusion as they rush to their pre-designated positions. It would be possible to predict where these are likely to be if the Travellers do their homework, enabling them to intercept or even ambush the defenders and exploit their lack of coordination.

HALF-BUILT FORT

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Half-Built Fort	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Static Emplacement	–
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Static	—
Combat	8	+1
Bombardment	6	0
Aerospace	5	–1
Support	4	–1
CEI or DEI	6	–1
Morale	9	0
Reputation	8	0

The fort is a problem, however. Even defended only by its weapon crews and security platoon it is a threat to anything within range of its big guns and reinforced with an infantry company it might be difficult to deal with. It could be bypassed by a grav-mobile force but even this gives the defenders some advantages as it creates a zone they do not have to defend with mobile forces. Putting the fort out of action will be a primary target for wise Travellers but this has nothing to do with mission success as far as the client is concerned. The client wants the docks smashed up and the fort is merely an obstacle to be overcome.

This fight can be almost ridiculously easy or it can go horribly awry. If the mercenaries do not catch the Dannebans on the hop they will run into inexperienced but determined soldiers in prepared positions. These have been well thought out – local forces have little practical experience but have had plenty of time to study their strategic situation. The mercenaries will face interlocking and mutually supporting strongpoints supported by a small mobile element using the force's few armoured vehicles, with aerospace denial in place and heavy artillery available in support.

If the mercenaries do not win quickly they face an additional problem. The Danneban armed forces are modest but contain a single light armoured battalion. This force uses wheeled vehicles with good road mobility and will set out from its base as soon as possible after fighting is reported. It will still be five hours before the lead elements approach the city. If the Travellers are still in the city – or worse, are engaged with defenders outside it – they will be caught by the armoured force. This will not be a good day out for anyone involved. In all likelihood the Danneban armed forces will be so badly mauled they never recover but casualties among the mercenaries are inevitable.

Demolition Work

The Travellers need to demolish the docks and, ideally, sink the ships in the harbour before withdrawing. Done well, this operation is a surgical strike that stuns the opposition followed by an efficient demolition job and rapid withdrawal. A poorly planned or executed operation will turn into an urban bloodbath and it is possible for the mercenaries to become trapped in a hostile city with armoured vehicles prowling around outside.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: CRITICAL: Destroy facilities in the dock area.
2: IMPORTANT: Keep civilian casualties to a minimum.
3: IMPORTANT: Withdraw before the armoured force arrives, avoiding contact.
4: ROUTINE: Sink some or all of the ships in the harbour.
5: ROUTINE: Catch the defenders by surprise.

One Critical, two Important and two Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 14. A well-planned operation will likely meet all of these objectives, whereas one that goes awry will probably fail multiple objectives and perhaps become a fiasco. This is the nature of high-tempo striker missions like this one; big wins or big failures are more common than a middle of the road outcome.

ADMINISTERING TIP OF THE SPEAR

The Travellers will have to learn sooner or later that they must perform reconnaissance and intelligence work before piling in. Those who fail to do so might accuse the Referee of being unfair when the inevitable disaster unfolds but lack of planning results in losses that can only be considered self-inflicted. The Referee should be fair but merciless.

Conventional wisdom holds that a three-to-one advantage is required for a successful attack but this assumes equivalently equipped forces. Advantages can come from more than just numbers; technology and tactics also count for a lot. In the final analysis, however, this is a straight in-and-out raid. Elements of the defending forces may never engage and there is no need to mop up those that are bypassed. Such units may try to join the fighting but are likely to become disorganised once they depart from the pre-prepared defensive battle plan. They will arrive piecemeal if they arrive at all, creating a confused situation in which the force with the best leadership, communications and training has a huge advantage.

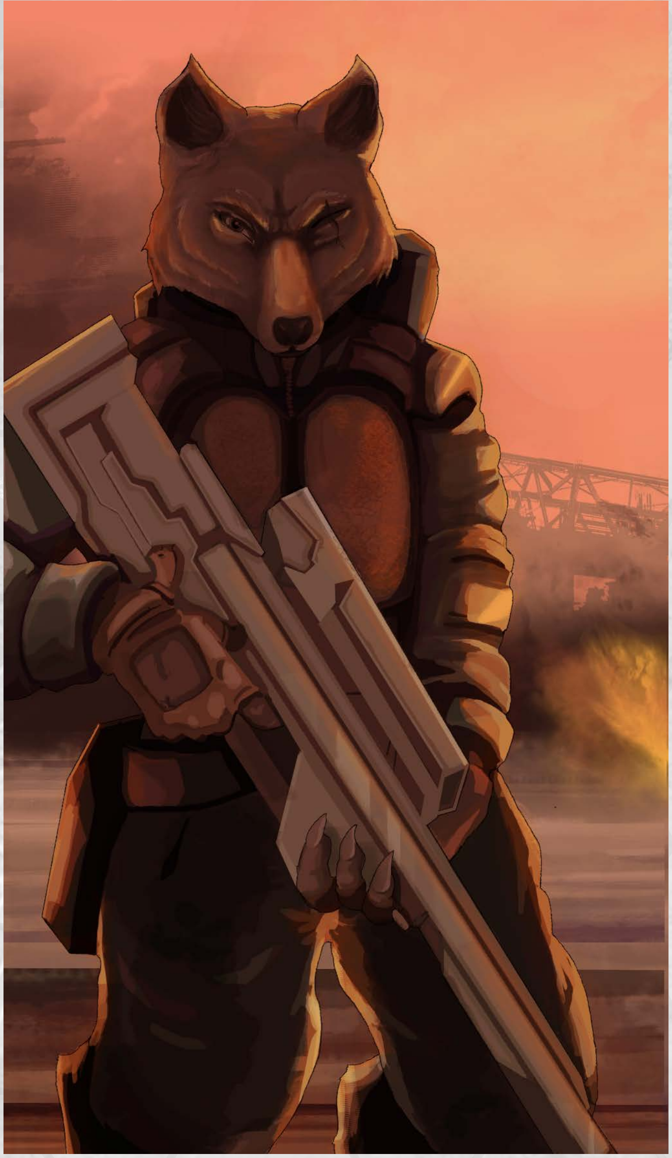
WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Warfighter, Battalion. MCr2.5 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The Tegrataal is a region characterised mainly by grassland and small forests, located on one of the worlds affected by the Cease Warmongering! movement. Its population have long stood apart from the rest of their world, occasionally demanding independence or autonomy but mostly being content to ignore wider affairs as much as possible. Open conflict between the CW! movement and the planetary government has provided an opportunity for secession and the cities of the Tegrataal have enthusiastically embraced it. The move went almost unnoticed for several months but now the government has begun to threaten forcible reintegration.

The Cities of the Tegrataal (CT) are offering MCr2.5 per month for a mobile battalion-sized force to conduct defensive operations along its southern frontier. Detachments will be necessary to cover key points, along with a mobile element to counter incursions. Some support will be available from local forces, increasing over time as units reach combat readiness. A bonus of MCr1.5 is payable upon arrival in theatre and an additional MCr2.5 will be payable for every three months served.

It is expected that the planetary government will attempt reconnaissance and testing intrusions in the near future. If these are firmly countered the situation may not escalate and independence should be recognised in due course. An aggressive response is therefore required, although the mercenaries may not attack targets outside CT territory.



Referee's Information

The Cities of the Tegrataal (CT) is a fledgeling alliance that is trying to evolve into an organised state. It might get there someday but at present it is still learning what statehood means. The Cities inherited some military assets when they declared independence and are trying to reorganise them into a coherent defence force. In the meantime, preparations for forcible reintegration have become obvious.

The CT analysis of the situation is reasonably accurate, up to a point. The world government will indeed attempt to probe the alliance's defences with the occasional reconnaissance in force. This is partly to obtain information and partly to inflict painful but minor defeats. The world government hopes that the independence movement will fall apart – which it might – if it is shown the Cities cannot defend themselves. The Travellers' performance in the field will give the independence movement a chance to really get going – or not – and may shape the future of the region.

Opposed Forces

Local forces are equipped to TL9 standards and competent due to involvement in many offworld conflicts. This is the origin of the situation; the Cease Warmongering! movement has waged a long, bitter and thoroughly ironic campaign, which still ties down most of the planetary armed forces. The world government will seek to reintegrate the cities on a shoestring budget, hoping they can be pressured rather than forced back into the fold. A few minor skirmishes are unlikely to cause deep-seated divisions in the way that an all-out war might, so the government is taking a soft and cautious approach.

This will change over time but at first the Travellers will face incursions by company-sized units aimed at probing defences and essentially picking small fights with the as-yet-disorganised forces of the Cities. Infiltrations in section and company strength will also be made, again partly for reconnaissance and partly to cause damage for little cost. The first few weeks of the campaign will be characterised by raids and skirmishes that will keep the Travellers on their toes. They will have to respond to reports of enemy forces over a wide area – reports that tend to be rather garbled and lacking in necessary details if they come from local units.

The central government has constructed forward bases near to the Tegrataal region, each with a small defensive contingent. These are currently off-limits to the mercenaries, which may be galling but is not an uncommon situation when an outcome short of war is still possible. From these forward bases the government has deployed three types of force: light armoured, ground recon and aerospace strike.

The light armoured force uses tracked vehicles with a higher strategic mobility than typical tracked AFVs but which mount relatively light weapons. All are built on the same chassis and engine package, being fitted out as cavalry fighting vehicles, direct support vehicles or indirect support vehicles. Infantry are integrated with the vehicles and operate in close conjunction with them, resulting in a designation as cavalry rather than infantry.

These forces are effective in the fast strike role or in a fluid battle in the open, with cavalry fighting vehicles remaining in close support of their dismounted infantry. Lasers and light missile weapons are favoured for CFVs, with indirect support vehicles mounting 120mm gun-howitzers and direct support variants equipped with either rapid-fire 40mm autocannon or a high velocity 80mm gun capable of putting holes in most light armoured vehicles. This force punches above its weight but is vulnerable to soldier-portable anti-armour weapons of one or two Tech Levels above its own.

The light armoured force will be used to make incursions in force into CT territory but not usually very far. The intention is to demonstrate that the cities cannot defend their territory or to eliminate small forces caught by reconnaissance of a company-sized formation. These formations are cautiously handled in strategic terms, since the government does not want to take embarrassing losses but tend to be highly aggressive when contact is made. The light armoured force is also available to respond to a situation that is getting out of hand, such as a ground recon force that becomes involved in a protracted action and cannot break contact.

The ground recon units are similar to special forces used by many states but make up a higher proportion of the government military than might be encountered elsewhere. Their standards are not up to those of high-end elite formations but they are skilled infiltrators. A ground recon unit will have some light grav vehicles in reserve for transportation into the target region and exfiltration after the mission is complete. Most operations are conducted on foot, using stealth rather than firepower and generally concerned with reconnaissance rather than destruction.

Ground recon units typically operate on the section level, with teams of up to 10 personnel carrying out lengthy missions in the field. A team will include a mix of personnel, all of whom have good basic combat skills and a specialism. This will include medics,

GOVERNMENT LIGHT ARMOURED FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Government Light Armoured Force	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Armoured Cavalry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Wheeled	—
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	3	–1
Aerospace	3	–1
Support	6	0
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	10	+2

marksmen, explosives handlers, cyber-intrusion experts and other areas of expertise, typically equipped with weapons of their own choosing. Whilst unable to stand up to a large enemy force on their own, an infiltration section could paralyse one with some well-placed explosives, assassination of senior commanders and a carefully directed air strike before melting away. Close cooperation with aerospace forces is a speciality.

The ground recon units will be sent over the border to conduct reconnaissance and sabotage operations. Their remit is to demoralise the CT forces with nuisance attacks and to embarrass them by their failure to deal with the problem. If a response force can be drawn out by sabotage then ambushed by air or armoured forces, the recon forces will try to make this happen – but the converse may also be attempted. One common trick is to make a raid with light armoured forces, quietly dropping off a recon section somewhere. This unit can observe the response force to gather data, direct air strikes onto it, harass its overnight laager with sniper fire or perhaps even drop a bridge span to trap the response force whilst the raiders turn on it. These units are highly motivated, well led and creatively used by their governmental masters and might prove to be the most frustrating enemies the Travellers face in the course of this ticket.

The aerospace strike forces use a combination of light grav sleds equipped with support weapons and conventional aircraft. They are effective but not used to operating in an environment where there are significant aerospace threats so might be complacent until they receive a wake-up call. Most aircraft are equipped with guided bombs and light missiles for ground attack and have very limited air-to-air capability.

GROUND RECON

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Ground Recon	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	–3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–3
Support	4	–2
CEI or DEI	10	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	10	+1

AEROSPACE STRIKE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Aerospace Strike	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Mixed Aerospace/Grav Strike	+12
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Aerospace	—
Combat	1	–2
Bombardment	8	0
Aerospace	4	–1
Support	7	0
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	10	+1

The forces of the Cities are drawn from the same army as those of the government but are not yet well organised and have been augmented with many new and part-trained recruits. The result is a rather tangled chain of command from which information rarely emerges in a coherent form. CT units will fight with varying degrees of enthusiasm and are a curious mix of clueless noobs and long-service professionals. They have few vehicles, as those elements of the local forces that did not want to become independent took them when they retreated from the region. The best use the Travellers can make of these units is as static defence garrisons or what amounts to tripwires but they will improve over time. Transport and armoured support remains a problem.

CT INFANTRY

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	CT Infantry	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Partial Motorised	0
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	2	–2
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	8	0

Early Phases

The early phase of the campaign, around 10 weeks or so, is characterised by intermittent incursions and skirmishes. The Travellers will have to take the lead in dealing with these, as the local forces tend to react slowly and in an inept manner. If the Travellers do not take action a rather depressing pattern emerges, of CT forces bumbling their way across the countryside in response to a garbled contact report, only to run into a counterattack or air strike.

One gambit the government forces use is to spoof radio traffic and either add to the already impressive confusion besetting the CT units or to elicit a response. This works repeatedly if the Travellers do not find an effective counter whilst at the same time the governmental forces become more daring and aggressive. They may even cheekily draw a forward-deployed company out of its positions, slip a recon force in and blow up their ammunition whilst the main CT force is away. It is clear the governmental forces are making fools of the CT commanders and this has an effect on support for the secession movement as well as morale in its military.

Astute Travellers will spot the pattern and the trend towards escalation and may be able to analyse the tactics in use. These are not complex but are varied enough to be at least somewhat unpredictable. The aim, at least in the early phase, is to inflict embarrassing defeats using limited operations, exposing government forces to as little risk as possible. If the Travellers can mitigate the effects of these incursions or even inflict defeats upon them, the secession movement will continue to consolidate its position and the effectiveness of its forces will rise – albeit slowly.

Escalation

About 10 weeks into the campaign the world government finally bites the bullet and transfers troops from fighting CW! insurgents to the Cities theatre. The Travellers may note this if they are paying attention to reconnaissance and intelligence. If not, they are likely to lose the ensuing fight.

Government forces continue to probe the defences and cause a diversion, whilst a combined-arms brigade prepares a few kilometres from the provisional border. The mercenaries might consider a pre-emptive strike, which would more than likely be effective, but they are forbidden by their rules of engagement from attacking outside territory claimed by the Cities. If they do carry out an effective attack they provide the world government with propaganda-fodder and actually harm the CT cause whilst scoring a military success.

As it is, the mercenaries must wait to be attacked. Requests for permission to strike pre-emptively will produce a lot of debate and discussion at a high level but no coherent answers. Eventually the government brigade will roll across the border. It is a mechanised infantry force using tracked APCs mounting fire support weapons, with light mobile artillery in support. An attached armoured element uses tracked AFVs mounting heavier weapons. This is a well organised and experienced force but one that has become used to fighting insurgents. It is not as effective as its commanders would like when operating en masse.

The Travellers could simply plonk their force in the way of the advancing brigade and dig in but they are probably better off to try for an encounter battle where they can defeat one element of the enemy force before others come up. Trying to take on the whole brigade at once will be a problem unless the Travellers' force is very well equipped.

What degree of support is available from local forces is up to the Referee. By this point in the campaign the locals are beginning to get organised but their morale is shaky and they are not up to complex manoeuvres. These forces are capable of putting up a good fight from prepared positions or following a simple plan and could make an effective 'anvil' with the mercenaries acting as a 'hammer'.

However they do it the mercenaries will have to halt the advance of the government forces before they reach the nearest city. The fragile alliance is likely to fall apart if it is demonstrated to be unable to protect its members and cities will seek the best reintegration terms they can get in this case. On the other hand, causing the government brigade to retire will bolster the alliance and thus have long-term consequences in addition to dealing with the military threat.

If the Travellers are successful they will receive their bonuses when they hand over to the Cities' greatly improved armed forces. They will also receive a letter of congratulation from the leaders of the militant Cease Warmongering! movement. The jumble of ironies inherent in that is likely to be a talking point for some time afterward.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: CRITICAL: Successfully oppose the early incursions.
2: CRITICAL: Force the government brigade to retire somehow.
3: IMPORTANT: Do not operate outside the border.
4: ROUTINE: Become aware of the government brigade by good intelligence work or other means.
5: ROUTINE: Liaise effectively with local forces.

Maximum TSI for this mission is 15. This can be achieved in a variety of ways – it really does not matter if the government brigade retreated due to a bluff or was driven from the field. As always, the Travellers can find many ways to win so long as they do actually win.

ADMINISTERING WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The Travellers will have to fight several times before the big showdown and coordinate responses against multiple threats. With patchy and contradictory information from local sources, they may not be able to assign resources perfectly to any given situation. This is part of being a mercenary and it is why clients are willing to pay for experts.

The government forces are not stupid and will most certainly not march blindly onto the guns of the mercenaries and their allies. If the Travellers hope to build a fortified position and have the enemy attack it they will be sadly disappointed. Indeed, if they passively await attack they will probably lose the war. For example, the government brigade probably has more artillery than the Travellers. If so, it can stand off and bombard their position, forcing them to come out and attack or abandon their defences. If they do neither they will be steadily ground down.

There are other ways the government can seize the initiative. If the Travellers are passive, mobile forces will attack where they are weak. Enough small defeats will gall the Cities' leaders into demanding action, or even firing their mercenaries, and will undermine the independence movement. The Travellers must act, either on their own terms or those of the government forces. This is what this mission is all about – solving a complex military problem rather than simply resolving a combat.

FLIPPING A COIN

Security, Battalion. MCr2 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.
The world government of Fairgreen has been unjustly targeted by the Cease Warmongering! movement, whose illegal activities have escalated into a major insurgency. This damages the infrastructure of the world and causes casualties among its citizens. Recently the very fabric of society has been damaged, with some regions considering secession from the world government. The time has come to end the insurgency. Having issued an ultimatum to the insurgents to stand down, the government is now seeking offworld assistance.

The government of Fairgreen is offering MCr2 per month plus thin-ticket levels of support for a battalion-sized force skilled in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. A bonus of MCr10 is payable if the insurgency is severely curtailed within six months of the force's arrival, dropping by MCr1 per month thereafter.

The contract will require a mix of defensive security operations and active removal of insurgent strongholds. Intense combat is to be expected on an intermittent basis. It is thought the opposition are in general not well supplied with heavy weapons or armoured vehicles.

Referee's Information

The insurgents have gained a good foothold on Fairgreen and control some rural regions. Small urban insurgencies are taking place in the cities. These are mostly contained and being slowly ground down by the security forces, although this is taking up a lot of resources and distracting attention from the rural situation. It is this that the authorities want the Travellers to counter, as their own forces are taking unacceptable losses and making little headway against an increasingly confident insurgency.

Opening Moves

The Travellers will be expected to begin security operations as a matter of urgency, launching patrols into the insurgent-controlled countryside in order to demonstrate the government's willingness and ability to challenge the insurgents. This will rapidly build into a full-scale counterinsurgency operation comprising intelligence-gathering, strikes against insurgent strongholds and a campaign to win over segments of the populace that might otherwise support the insurgents.

Exactly how the Travellers go about this depends on the circumstances and their preferences. Many Travellers will prefer to seek a clear target then smash it rather than groping about in the dark or conducting nebulous actions to influence an apparently unreceptive populace. However, defeating an insurgency requires a package of measures. If the Travellers focus too much on the military aspects of the ticket they might find themselves lamenting that they won every battle they fought… yet are being shipped out of a captured starport without payment for a ticket that went unaccountably awry.

The Travellers' early goals need to be to get some boots on the ground and be seen to be doing something, whilst gathering intelligence and looking for a way to get ahead of the curve. The first is easy enough; it would not be difficult to identify a few areas that seem to be under threat and put patrols through them. This does run the risk of being attacked or even ambushed but good battlefield skills and the availability of a reaction force can offset this. Something as basic as being seen in areas where the planetary army is not will signal a change in the wind as far as the populace is concerned. This will garner some interest and so long as the Travellers do not meet with immediate disaster the segment of the populace opposed to the insurgency will be encouraged. The insurgents themselves will greet the mercenaries arrival with blasts of propaganda proclaiming their deployment as proof the government is just a pack of warmongers but in reality there is little else the government can do now that the CW! movement has become an open insurgency.

Striking at Hearts and Minds

One of the factors the mercenaries are up against is the entrenched idea that the government is really a collection of warmongering egotists who use force to get what they want. There is little truth in this, other than the fact that Fairgreen did send troops to assist in a couple of offworld situations but the message has been shouted endlessly and taken root with anyone who dislikes something the government has done. The insurgency has many passive supporters among the populace and many more people consider it is 'fair enough'. The general image is that the government chose this fight by attacking the peaceful Cease Warmongering! movement and is now reaping its just rewards. This has led to an increasing anti-war movement that is at present peaceful, with echoes of the original CW! campaign.

If the government is not seen to get on top of the situation soon there is a real risk of being forced into negotiations with the insurgents. The alternative, of course, is to use force to end the conflict. Every attempt to do so strengthens the popular opinion about governmental warmongering. This might be acceptable if the use of force was successful, so the mercenaries will be under a great deal of pressure to produce results quickly.

In order to do that the mercenaries need to hit targets, which means identifying them first. Strikes must be precise to avoid fuelling the propaganda war with collateral casualties – and the government genuinely wants to avoid killing its own people. Violence alone will not be enough, however. The Travellers will need to conduct their own hearts and minds campaign. The only way this insurgency can be defeated is to chip away at its popular support. It can be weakened in other ways, especially if the Travellers are able to think creatively.

Outside the Box

The Travellers are in the position of trying to oppose a violent insurgency without giving it a moral high ground by using violence. A counter-propaganda campaign to point out the hypocrisy of the CW! position is underway but is largely ignored by the populace. If the Travellers can discredit or weaken the CW! movement without a large body count, they may be able to get back into the game.

One option is to identify the insurgents' sources of weaponry and equipment. These include importers, smugglers and workshops that convert civilian vehicles into weapons carriers. In some cases a dent can be made in the supply chain by something as simple as identifying an offworld arms dealer and making them stop providing weapons to the insurgents. This might be done through legal channels but violence or intimidation might make the situation worse. Simple bribery can also work; if it is more lucrative not to supply arms, most dealers will select that option.

Gambits of this nature can undermine the capabilities of the insurgency, whilst more straightforward raids on the arms supply chain will not only disrupt the flow of weaponry but provide fodder for counter-propaganda. A large cache of arms intercepted on its way to an organisation calling itself Cease Warmongering! could be an embarrassment if played well in the media.

Direct Action

Whatever other action is taken, it will be necessary to operate against the insurgents somehow. Since they are operating in defiance of their planetary government's laws they can be treated as criminals rather than combatants. This is a tricky business, since it means operating within the law against those who are ignoring it, which can place the Travellers at a disadvantage. It does give them a superior moral position, however. If the Travellers are merely assisting the local police in rounding up armed criminals… that is likely to be perceived differently to charging around the countryside in tanks. If the Travellers choose to go down the full-military route they simplify their operations but play to the enemy propagandists.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Typical CW! Insurgent Band	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Motorised Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	4	–1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	8	+1
Reputation	9	+1

As with most counterinsurgency operations there will be negotiations interspersed with use of force, or threats of it, and there will be steps back for every few forward. Often the mercenaries will be more or less certain that individuals are insurgents or supporting them but have no evidence and will be forced to release them. They could go down the route of executing suspected rebels but this is a war crime. The government would probably turn a blind eye for a while but eventually the mercenary unit will come under investigation. Atrocities will be used by the CW! movement, which is adept at such measures and may ultimately lead to the government losing the war.

There are no perfect answers to this situation. The mercenaries are acting lawfully if they strike an identified insurgent camp and respond to hostile action with lethal force, and whilst this will be played by the CW! propagandists a good strike can weaken the organisation or drive supporters underground. The usual model for defeating an insurgency of this kind is to weaken its military arm until it cannot hold an area, then sweep in and clean up with law enforcement personnel. At the same time support is undermined by winning over the populace until the insurgency fizzles out.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: CRITICAL: Greatly reduce the power of the insurgent movement in at least some areas.
2: CRITICAL: Conduct operations to win over the population and weaken support for the movement.
3: IMPORTANT: Do not cause atrocities or at least do not get caught.
4: IMPORTANT: Capture some of the insurgents' senior leaders for a public trial.
5: ROUTINE: Curtail popular support and/or the shipment of arms to the insurgents.

The maximum TSI for this ticket is 16, which will not be at all easy to achieve. Counterinsurgency operations are among the most difficult to complete successfully and cleanly, and those forces that can pull it off are rarely short of work.

ADMINISTERING FLIPPING A COIN

As with most larger-unit tickets this is a mini-campaign rather than a quick in-and-out. The Travellers will need to deal with a variety of situations, many of them tricky and threatening but not necessarily violent. One possible adventure is dealing with allegations that their soldiers fired on unarmed civilians – an allegation the CW! movement is fond of throwing around. The Travellers may be investigating their own people or attempting to prove they did not carry out an atrocity.

For the most part, operations will be carried out by detached parts of the force. These will often be outnumbered when combat occurs – insurgents have a tendency to melt away when overmatched – but a good system of mobile backup and operational orders that do not place elements of the unit beyond support will offset this. Indeed, an element of seduction is necessary if the insurgents are to be brought to action on favourable terms. This means creating a situation where the insurgents want to fight, thinking they can win, then deploying additional forces to defeat them and perhaps more to cut off their retreat.

The Travellers will face a wearying grind of patrols that do not make contact with the enemy, surly but not actively hostile civilians who may well be harbouring insurgents, the occasional roadside bomb or attack on an outpost and similar frustrating situations that make the ticket feel like groping around in fog. This can be countered by collecting information and evidence until a significant stronghold can be identified. Hauls of captured equipment and personnel, shown off on national media, might be worth more to the mercenaries than praise or medals since they indicate progress being made.

CHAPTER-SEVEN

SPECIALIST TICKETS

Specialist tickets vary considerably in terms of the actions to be carried out and the size of the force required. Typically a small group of armed experts are required, who must have certain skills or equipment among them. Specialist tickets also include contracts for supporting formations such as medical or combat engineering units, in which case larger formations may be required.

MUCKRAKING

Specialist, Section. Cr100000. Success-only.

Port Reikir depends heavily on maritime shipping to take its goods to market on-planet. This in turn requires regular dredging of the deep-water channel between the maritime docks and open sea. Being greedy fat cats concerned only with their profit margins, the port's operators have only obtained one dredger. It is a large vessel, custom-built with imported equipment, and would take some time to replace.

A client who wishes to remain anonymous is offering Cr100000 for a force to seize the dredger, guide it into the deep-water channel and scuttle it in the most inconvenient place possible.

The dredger is not expected to be guarded when in operation, but routine security is in place around the maritime docks. Port Reikir has a modest security complement equipped with TL12 small arms. Heavy armour and weapons are not thought to be present.

Referee's Information

The client is obviously the world government, which resents the economic advantages enjoyed by Port Reikir. The attack will be blamed on 'rogue elements' or perhaps terrorists. Scuttling the dredger will not only cause the channel to silt up over the coming weeks, it will also block the channel if done correctly. Salvage equipment suitable for raising the wreck is available but the owners of Port Reikir have not invested in it. If they want the wreck removed quickly they will have to ask the planetary government for help. The same is true if they want to replace the dredger. In addition to disrupting the shipping in and out of the port, the mission is intended to force the local government to grant economic concessions in return for assistance.

The Target

The dredger is quite a big vessel, mostly automated with a crew of just four personnel. There is a gun aboard, in the emergency locker, but the crew will not resist a boarding by heavily armed mercenaries. If the dredger is to be boarded in the docks, the mercenaries will have to contend with portside security patrols, who are armed with sidearms and batons.

The dredger is easy enough to control even for an unskilled person but there is more to operating it than clicking on a waypoint. The Travellers will have to contend with currents and eddies in the delta and possibly other watercraft. Getting the dredger to the right spot also requires knowledge of watercraft operations, which is what makes this a specialist rather than a commando ticket.

Opposition

As already noted the dredger crew are not combatants and cannot put up any significant resistance. If the mercenaries are truly inattentive someone might get clobbered with a big spanner as the crew try to escape, but otherwise they are not going to be a problem. However, once the alarm is raised the port's security force will arm up and make a response. Personnel have military body armour and advanced combat rifles available but few support weapons more powerful than a light machinegun or heavy laser rifle. They do have access to a few grav vehicles that could be used to assault the dredger if necessary.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	CT Infantry	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	8	–1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	5	–1
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	10	+1
Reputation	8	0

Aftermath

This should be a very straightforward mission in terms of the hijacking and scuttling but sometimes the adventure is not the mission itself. A combination of speed, stealth and a bit of bluff might carry the whole thing off without a hitch but there is certainly the potential for this mission to go badly wrong. Even if it does not, there is an additional complication that the client does not really care about and the Travellers may fail to foresee.

Port Reikir is the world's main spaceport, with few ships using the government-controlled official starport. Getting offworld might be a problem if the Travellers are identified. If they use simple measures such as covering faces and not leaving evidence lying around that can identify them, the Travellers will still fall under suspicion if they travel through the starport. A band of military-looking people leaving the planet just after a commando raid is a bit obvious.

The Travellers will be pulled in for questioning in this case. They do not have to prove their innocence, merely avoid the local authorities having enough evidence – or self-incriminating statements – to charge them. The Travellers might solve this problem by being careful, frantic courtroom weaselling or finding another way offworld. The Referee should note that in the case of operations of this sort a licensing authority cannot provide legal protection if the mercenaries took actions that constitute a crime in the locality. This is a matter of common sense for most mercenaries but there are some who cannot tell the difference between a legitimate act in a war-like situation and a covert operation that requires a discreet departure from the locality.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: PARAMOUNT: Put the dredger out of action in a manner that makes it difficult or impossible to repair.
2: IMPORTANT: Scuttle the dredger where it will be most inconvenient for the port's operators.
3: ROUTINE: Avoid unnecessary loss of life.
4: ROUTINE: Remain unidentified or ensure there is no evidence to use against the mercenaries.
5: ROUTINE: Conceal the client's identity by ensuring there is no evidence typing them to the mission.

One Paramount, one Important and three Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 14. The client will consider the mission successful enough to pay the mercenaries if the dredger is put out of action for a few weeks but really wants it completely wrecked and forming a silt island in the shipping channel. A high level of success will induce the client to assist in sneaking the mercenaries offworld.

ADMINISTRATING MUCKRAKING

This is, in essence, a straightforward mission but the aftermath has the potential to become very complicated. If the mercenaries do good reconnaissance and intelligence work they should be able to take control of the dredger bloodlessly and without the authorities being any the wiser. Once the vessel starts behaving oddly, someone will take notice. However, administrators at the port are used to seeing the dredger going out to do its work and might not consider there is anything amiss even if it does not have a mission plan filed. They will contact the vessel and ask what is going on but can be bluffed for a while.

If, or more likely when, the alarm is raised there will be a response from the security force. This is the part of the mission the mercenaries need to have planned most carefully. They will need to exfiltrate, possibly under fire, and will be pursued if they are detected. Pursuit will not be especially determined, however; once the force leaves the vicinity of the port the security detachment will return to base. Getting offworld after this might pose problems but the mercenaries can mitigate risks with good planning.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Specialist, Company. MCr1 plus bonuses. Ongoing.

Port Reikir is connected to the mainland by a pair of causeways across the wide river delta, providing both road and rail links to local communications hubs. The importance of these overland links is less than that of the maritime shipping facility at the port and maintenance on these links has received a low priority for some years. As a result, the aggressive local flora has begun to seriously encroach on the landward stretches and the swampy areas around some of the bridges are also in need of clearance. Recent events have brought to light the vulnerability of the port's transport network and it has been deemed necessary to take remedial action.

The operating consortium of Port Reikir is offering MCr1 for a company-sized unit on a three-month deployment, with the possibility of extension. An engineering unit is preferred but a force with some combat engineering capability will suffice. This force will undertake forest clearance, vegetation removal, inspection and repair of both major causeways, and install security emplacements at key points. Combat, as such, is not expected although there are natural hazards in the operating environment.

Referee's Information

Port Reikir is becoming concerned about possible damage to its transport links, not without cause. The desire to repair and secure the causeways is genuine but the port's operators are also keen to have additional defensive capability on call. They do not want to be seen nervously hiring mercenaries, so have compromised on a combat-capable engineering formation that can get necessary work done during its deployment.

Working in the Field

The work is actually quite difficult and worthy of a combat engineering unit. Local vegetation is persistent, tough and grows quickly. It must be aggressively cleared and kept back with barriers, concreted-over areas or defoliants. The port authority is entirely happy for the mercenaries to do this but the causeways technically lie outside the territory of the port. Local officials will attempt to interfere with the work on environmental grounds and will be surprisingly pushy over the matter. This is a symptom of the general antipathy on-planet towards the port and its operators.

The mercenaries will, if they are diligent, discover several defects either in the original construction or caused by encroachment of roots, undermining by river currents and the like. These are sufficient to eventually cause sections of the causeway to fail, which will happen at some point if the mercenaries are lackadaisical. Repairs will have to be undertaken under difficult conditions but that is what combat engineers do for a living.

These operations can be abstracted as operations using the unit's Support characteristic. If the Travellers lay out a good plan to survey for defects and potential problems before plunging into the job they will suffer no penalties for the difficult conditions but mercenaries who fail to do so should be penalised at the Referee's discretion. A simple bridge-repair job will become far more complex if the section being used to support the Travellers' heavy equipment turns out to be weaker than expected. There is a real possibility for casualties even without hostile action but this is as always mitigated by a good plan.

Interference

Interference by local officials will at first take the form of protests, delays in providing licenses or allowing materials through to the site and other bureaucratic hassles. If this does not work, direct attempts will eventually be made to impede the mercenaries' work. This will take the form of officials storming into the work site waving legal writs and backed up by armed guards. It may happen multiple times as the locals find aspects of the port's contract to take exception to or require clarification of work orders, or anything else they can find to slow down work and frustrate the mercenaries.

This is not a situation that can be easily solved with gunfire, as an incident between mercenaries serving the port and the host world's government can result in open conflict or serious economic damage from a long legal battle. It would be grounds to terminate the mercenaries' contract and withhold their fee… assuming of course they started it. The mercenaries may be able to negotiate a resolution, strongarm the locals or fight them and portray the incident as necessary self-defence after some local idiot opened fire. This might be ticklish but smart Travellers can wriggle their way out of a bad situation.

Depending on how they handle the interference, the Travellers may be able to shut it down with their own legal action or find a reason to exclude local officials from the work area – at gunpoint if necessary. If they can establish a legally controlled zone they have the right to deal with armed intruders using lethal force and the locals know it. They will not push the matter if this is the case.

Other than if the Travellers are provoked into violence there is little prospect of a stand-up fight on this deployment. The port authority might request assistance with a situation such as a hijacking or repossession of an illegally held starship, and the Travellers might have to deal with the local equivalent of giant crocodiles, but there will be no major military threat on this mission unless the Travellers pick a fight with the world government.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: IMPORTANT: Carry out inspection, repair and construction work as needed.
2: IMPORTANT: Deal with local governmental interference without violence.
3: ROUTINE: Identify flaws and weak spots in the causeway.
4: ROUTINE: If an incident occurs, weasel out of the blame. If no incident occurs this objective is considered to be fully completed.
5: ROUTINE: Avoid taking any serious or fatal casualties in accidents or animal attacks.

Two Important and three Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 12. This is not a mission that is going to make its way into history books but it will present the Travellers with a different set of challenges.

ADMINISTRATING
BUILDING BRIDGES

This mission is about non-violent problem-solving, although the Travellers might have some fun blowing up the forests or hunting giant crocodilians in the swamp. They may be sure there will be an attack or sabotage but if there is always a violent incident on every mission this can become contrived and predictable. If the Travellers are desperate for some action they might be tasked with dealing with a hijacking or some other unrelated incident.

DEFENCE REVIEW

Specialist, Section. Cr100000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The armed forces of the Cemmbiner Republic are outdated and in urgent need of overhaul. The military is large for the population size and absorbs a great many talented people who might contribute more elsewhere. The main reason for this is a history of empire-building within the force and blatant cronyism regarding posts and ranks as well as defence contracts. The end result is an overgrown, expensive and ineffective mess. Attempts to rationalise and downsize are vigorously resisted or manipulated to result in increased budgets for those who come out on top in the furious internal political squabbles that surround all such measures.

The Cemmbiner Republic is offering Cr100000 for a small team of independent military experts to conduct an audit of their armed forces. The team will also be expected to provide recommendations for equipment disposal and purchase. A bonus is payable based on the savings that will be made by the armed forces.

No combat is expected.

Referee's Information

The fee for this ticket is high for a small-unit job because it requires significant knowledge. The Tactics skill will be useful as well as Admin and Broker. There is also the factor that a successful review could save the government hundreds of millions of Credits and may cut through the internal politics of the bloated military establishment.

The upper echelons of the military establishment are wracked with corruption and grift, with most senior officers skimming the budget or pursuing political ambitions in various underhand ways. The worst among them is the director of the overgrown aerospace defence contingent, who has built an empire within the military and its supporting industries, and has gained control over some areas that should not really be her concern. For example, the army has a small grav tank contingent but somehow these are all controlled by the aerospace defence forces 'for the protection of vital aerospace defence installations'.

Hostile Review

The Travellers' mission is known to the entire defence establishment long before they arrive and they will face resistance from all sides. Often this will come in the form of cordial invitations to a mess dinner or a weekend at a senior officer's private estate. Influence and charm will be brought to bear along with subtle and not-subtle bribery. This is all accompanied by mass obfuscation, feet-dragging and delaying tactics. The military establishment does not want a clear picture to emerge of where it is spending its vastly inflated budget and will conspire to derail the review of at all possible. If that fails, the next step is an attempt to ensure the cuts fall on other little empires within the military.

The Travellers could go along with all of this, enjoying the hospitality and wringing the biggest bribes they can out of factions in the military. If they do, they will have to find a few token savings here and there but the hoped-for reorganisation of the military will not happen. The faction leaders will be happy, the client will pay the fee and everyone can go about their business.

If the Travellers are diligent they will not make any friends among the factions. They will soon see that exercises are being scripted to produce a false image of competence and that the faction leaders are directing contracts to favoured suppliers at an inflated price in return for kickbacks. The military is highly inefficient when not following a pre-prepared script and indeed is beginning to struggle to do even that. Troops are demoralised, burdened by the wrong equipment and badly trained. The whole rotten mess needs to be reorganised with an iron fist and supply contracts realigned with the Republic's actual needs.

If the Travellers do present a plan to do this they will have to justify it, especially as they are more or less accusing the nation's generals and colonels of mass corruption. This might take the form of a negotiation or a court of inquiry if rules mechanics are required and could lead to some adventures as the Travellers try to covertly obtain damning evidence. Along the way, there is a more sinister secret to be uncovered.

Treason at the Top

The head of the world's aerospace defence forces is the richest and most powerful of the military fat cats. She controls not just the entire aerospace defence system and all its personnel but also segments of other sectors including equipment procurement and disposal. Not content with kickbacks for new equipment at inflated prices she has also been manipulating the disposal process. Typically this has meant disposing of equipment in far better condition than the official documentation claimed, selling it on the underground mercenary market. She was never very careful about who the client was and the Travellers may discover that one of her regular customers is a front for an insurgent movement on a nearby world.

This goes beyond grift, since the arms have been used against the forces of an allied government. The aerospace commander faces possible treason charges and certainly a criminal investigation. To avoid this she begins by trying to discredit the mercenaries or get them fired but when that fails she is quite willing to have them killed. This is not a go-to option however. The Travellers will get some warning in the form of intimidation, threats or a straight offer of a fat bribe to just go away. Only as a final resort will the aerospace commander send some of her minions to take out the Travellers and they will try to do it in a deniable manner or put the blame on another faction.

The Travellers may have to survive multiple assassination attempts in order to carry out their mission. Fortunately, the people available to carry out these attacks are little more competent than the local forces. By demonstrating the incompetence of the local military, the Travellers have made incompetent enemies. The irony of that might be lost on them, however.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Aerospace Hit Squad	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	–
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	7	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	6	–1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	9	+1

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: IMPORTANT: Visit a variety of units and installations, conducting a thorough appraisal of each.
2: IMPORTANT: Do not antagonise the factions by overtly refusing their 'hospitality'.
3: IMPORTANT: Expose the aerospace commander's corruption and insurgent connections.
4: ROUTINE: Do not permit all the blame to be placed on one faction.
5: ROUTINE: Present a meaningful appraisal of the situation and recommendations on how to remedy it.

Three Important and two Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 13. If the Travellers expose the level of corruption within the military they will be paid a bonus of Cr100000 or more.

ADMINISTRATING DEFENCE REVIEW

This mission takes the form of an investigation rather than a fight, although there may be one towards the end. The Travellers will be attending functions and having drinks with high-ranking officers, trying to tease out information among the platitudes and amusing anecdotes. There may be some adventures to be had along the way, however. The Travellers will be visiting troops in the field or on training exercises and might be exposed to all manner of natural hazards, badly driven vehicles and the like. They may even have to rescue some local troops from a disaster of their own making, which might spark suspicions about how differently the military performs in the field to official reports of its activities.

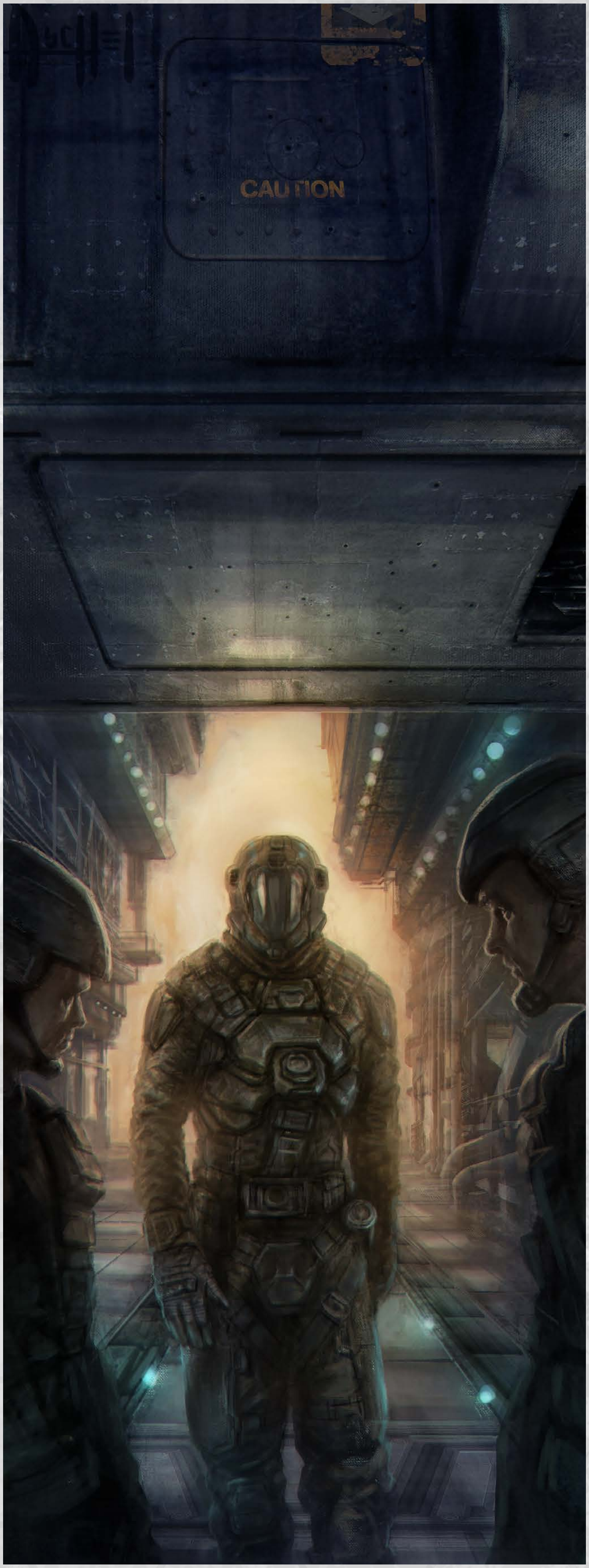
ILLEGAL EAGLES

Specialist, Section. Cr50000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The civil war on Krikyan has been sputtering on for several years, with neither side gaining an advantage for long. A multi-world peacekeeping force is on-planet in accordance with an agreed intervention five years ago but its backing consortium has long since given up trying to persuade the combatant factions to negotiate. Instead the level of violence is kept down by forbidding the import or use of weapons above TL5, the world's native Tech Level. Mercenary ground forces are also not allowed. The regulations surrounding equipment use in this conflict were hastily drawn up and have inconsistencies and loopholes that can be exploited by inventive lawyers.

The Eastern Confederacy is offering Cr50000 per month plus bonuses for a small group of aviation-warfare advisors to improve the efficiency of its air force. Pilots are necessary but the force can include technical personnel and a small security contingent if necessary. Bonuses are payable for successes in air-to-air combat directly attributable to the mercenary force.

The mercenaries will be expected to demonstrate techniques in a practical manner and may be engaged by enemy forces intruding into Confederacy airspace. Combat may therefore occur.



Referee's Information

The war on Krikyan is a particularly desultory affair. The world is sparsely populated, with wide areas of wilderness separating its small cities. Air travel is commonplace, since ground-level links are difficult and expensive to maintain. A dispute between some of the cities and the world government has gradually expanded into a low-intensity conflict, which drains resources without providing any benefit. Ideologies have gradually hardened, to the point where both the Eastern Confederacy and the Central Republic consider themselves the legitimate planetary government and are willing to drive their economies into the ground to prove it.

Ground forces must operate over long distances in order to reach their targets. Resupply is possible by sea or river in some cases but in the continental interior it is necessary to fly supplies to temporary airstrips. Control of the air has become the most important factor in this war but with the small bases on both sides it has not proven possible to obtain a decisive advantage. In recent months the Republic has made some gains, largely through the deployment of a new design of cheap fighter, and now has airbases within striking distance of the Confederacy's cities. The balance seems to be finally tipping.

Advisors… Mostly

The Confederacy has found an exploitable loophole that might counter the recent shift in the strategic balance. Mercenary ground forces cannot be deployed and large units cannot be brought in for any purpose. However, a group of 'advisors' who just happen to get attacked by enemy aircraft whilst 'demonstrating techniques' can be justified and will not trigger intervention.

The Confederacy's air force is composed mainly of TL5 civilian aircraft fitted with whatever weapons are available. Light aircraft and trainers have been converted into crude fighters, with transports serving as ground-attack platforms. Most weapons are manually aimed machineguns and basic bomb or rocket racks. A few custom-built combat aircraft are available to both sides but manufacturing capability is low. As a result a single aircraft or a good pilot can make a real difference.

The mercenaries are expected to find ways to improve the Confederacy's air combat and ground-attack capability but that is mainly a legal fiction to cover their deployment. The Confederacy wants heroes to lead its air force in repelling the enemy advance. The Republic's bases are located in difficult terrain, which will make dislodging them with the available ground forces virtually impossible. They can be attacked from the air or their supplies – which also come in by air – can be cut off. Either or both may force a withdrawal.

The mercenaries will be forced to fly converted TL5 civilian aircraft or rather poor custom-built fighters, battling it out with machineguns and autocannon over the wilderness of Krikyan. Whilst their presence will be questioned by the peacekeeping force, if they make a successful justification of their actions and do not use weaponry or equipment of greater than TL5 they will be permitted to stay.

Leading the Fight

The mercenaries will find themselves alternating between meetings with the Confederacy's military commanders, technical exercises intended to wring a little more airspeed out of a common light aircraft and 'training' or 'demonstration' flights that always seem to involve contact with the opposition's air force for some reason. They might also undertake some operations at ground level, such as infiltrating close to an enemy airbase to carry out reconnaissance or sabotage.

The bonuses payable for downing enemy aircraft or hitting significant ground targets are supposedly for actions on the part of local pilots but attributable to the mercenaries' influence. This is an obvious fiction. In fact bonuses of Cr5000 to Cr25000 will be paid for downing enemy aircraft or making effective ground attacks. This is described as 'demonstrating technique' if there are questions to be answered about the mercenaries' participation and at some point those questions will be asked. The Republic will object to the mercenaries' presence and petition the peacekeeping force to have them removed. The mercenaries will need to justify their position. This could be done using the court of inquiry rules found on page 47 of *Book 2*.

ADMINISTERING ILLEGAL EAGLES

This ticket is a case of mercenaries being hired for their skills but not permitted to bring their weapons of choice. Nobody will care much if they have small arms for self-defence, despite this being a technical violation of the regulations. The Travellers might not realise this but if they do they have the potential to sneak in a few advanced weapons. What they might do with those is an open question, since the mercenaries are hired as flyers and support crew, but it is possible they may have 'problems' during a relocation and land somewhere near enemy ground troops. If the Travellers want to get creative in this manner they can of course do whatever they please – but will have to justify it to an inquiry or be arrested and deported.

The mission could be an interesting change of pace for the Travellers, pottering across the sky in primitive contraptions to do battle with the local fighter aces. There are plenty of opportunities for combat but the Referee should not neglect the legal side of the situation. Creative interpretation of regulation clauses and flimsy legal arguments will keep them in the fight. The Referee might choose to play out an action then immediately have the Travellers justify it, finding alternative ways to describe what they just did in a manner that stays just inside the regulations.

As always, the Travellers might find completely different ways to handle the mission. If the advisors are 'busy preparing reports' for a few days during which an enemy airbase suffers several mysterious explosions it may be blatantly obvious what has happened – but the problem is proving it. Smart Travellers with a good cover story can cut through the whole Gordian knot and defeat the Republic without ever engaging in air-to-air combat.

The ticket could run for years if the mercenaries want; this conflict is not going to end any time soon. However, bonuses will go down after the first couple of months as the client becomes used to success and begins to regret the financial drain. Once the forward airbases are eliminated the client will begin intimating it is time the mercenaries moved on and will terminate their contract whenever the Referee decides the adventure is no longer sufficiently interesting.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

1: CRITICAL: Destroy or force the abandonment of the forward bases.
2: IMPORTANT: Successfully fend off objections to or questions about the mercenaries' presence.
3: ROUTINE: Score victories over the opposing air force.
4: ROUTINE: Make successful ground attacks to show the locals how it should be done.
5: ROUTINE: Improve the Confederacy's air warfare capability.

The maximum TSI achievable on this ticket is 13. This requires a mix of prowess in the air and creativity in the courtroom. It is entirely possible to fail the mission due to a legal ruling despite winning in the air. If the peacekeepers do decide the Travellers' presence is illegal they can deploy high-tech weapons and grav vehicles against the Travellers' makeshift planes, with predictable results.

CHAPTER-EIGHT

TICKET-ADVENTURES

Some mercenary tickets lead to situations more akin to a normal Traveller adventure and will be played out using the standard rules for the most part. There are some differences, however. Any unit capable of taking on a mercenary ticket will be well-armed and highly competent – and most of all more numerous than a typical band of Travellers. The Referee must also keep in mind that the Travellers have spent a lot of time and resources building up their unit. Knocking off several members of the force as plot incidents deprives the Travellers of their investment without giving them the ability to make meaningful decisions. Travellers who leave their people without support in dangerous places cannot complain if some are killed or injured but they must be permitted to make the decisions that lead to this.

For example, if the Travellers put a member of their unit on lookout and they are targeted by a sniper, this is an occupational hazard of being a mercenary. However, it is not acceptable to simply narrate that the lookout has been shot as an immutable plot element. It would be fine if the lookout's role in the story is simply to be shot and killed – a character introduced by the Referee as the victim of a plot element is fair game. For members of the Travellers' unit – and its inanimate assets too – the same rules of agency apply as to the Travellers themselves.

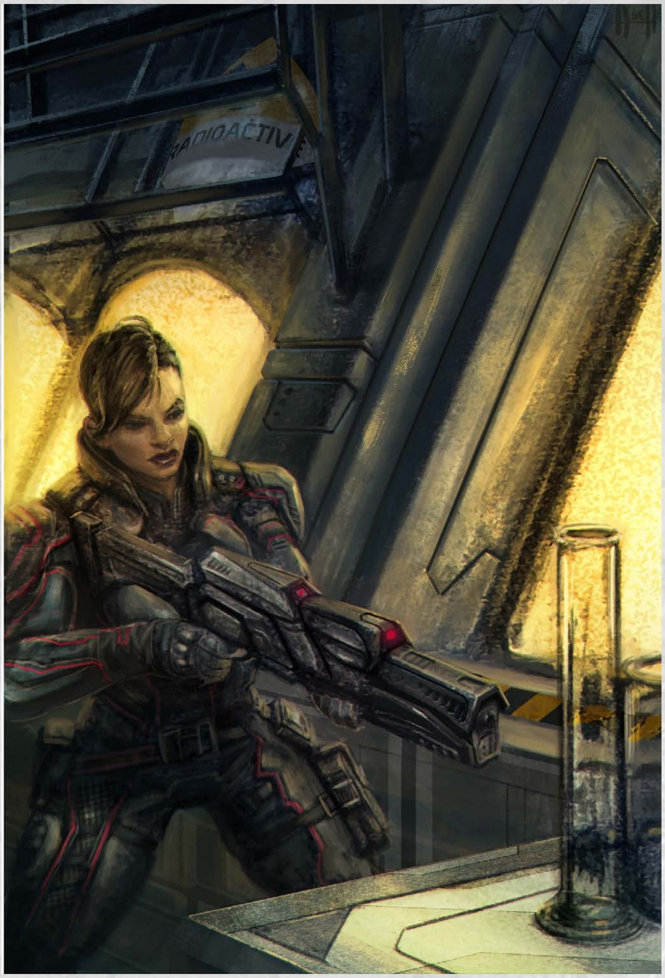
This does not mean the lookout is safe. However, the situation must be adjudicated fairly by the Referee and set up in such a way that the Travellers can make meaningful decisions. If the Travellers decide there needs to be a lookout, so be it. There might be other consequences if none is posted. If the Travellers do not consider the possibility of attack, again so be it. However, the sniper should not automatically kill the lookout. A skill check will be necessary – the sniper might miss the first shot. This check will be modified by circumstances, allowing the Travellers and their enemies to influence the situation.

The opposition might stack the odds but the Travellers should always be able to find a decision chain that led to an event. Better intelligence work, remote sensors or a different lookout pattern might all contribute to the survival of that lookout if the Travellers had made the right choices. It is fair enough if they are constricted by circumstances or deceived in some way, because that happened in-game. This is the key to all such situations; an event that happens in-game and could possibly have been avoided if the Travellers made different decisions or had more resources is acceptable; taking away one of their assets as a result of an out-of-game plot decision is not. It is acceptable to impose a plot event that potentially removes an asset if the Travellers have a chance to remedy the situation. In that case, the lookout might be hit by a sniper's shot as a plot element but is not dead. They could be saved if the Travellers act in time, which means their survival is dependent on in-game decisions.

RESEARCHING WHAT, EXACTLY?

Specialist, Section. Cr50000 plus bonuses. Ongoing.
The Hattern Corporation is a market leader in the field of specialised pharmaceuticals and health products. Hattern's products have tamed pandemics, cured genetic disorders and improved the lives of millions on underprivileged worlds. This is a result of ongoing cutting-edge research conducted by the most innovative of scientists. Research must, of necessity, be undertaken in secrecy to avoid competitors bringing inferior products to the market whilst Hattern is still developing the definitive version. To this end the corporation has established a number of secure research facilities on sparsely populated worlds. One such facility, located in the Randell Mountains, has reported communications difficulties on several occasions. Contact has now been lost.

The Hattern Corporation is offering Cr50000 for a section-sized mercenary unit to investigate the situation at the Randell Mountains facility and, if necessary, secure the site. It is possible that the facility has been attacked by competitors or some other outside agency or that some other misshape has occurred. If the facility staff are on-site the mercenary force will follow directions as to how best to assist. If foul play has occurred the mercenary force will secure the site and all research materials present and begin gathering evidence if its personnel are capable of doing so. Communications must be restored as soon as possible in either case. The facility is remote, so a unit with its own transportation is preferred.



The situation at the Randell Mountains facility is unknown. Combat is possible but considered unlikely. In the event that the facility is in hostile hands or hostiles remain in the area a negotiable bonus is payable for driving off and/or capturing the intruders.

Referee's Information

The Travellers may detect a fishy odour coming from this ticket brief but strikes against remote research facilities are a fact of life in the high-end corporate world. Indeed, the Travellers may have engaged in something similar during their own mercenary careers. If the Travellers consider the situation from an in-game perspective rather than any similarity to the opening of a horror movie, they will conclude that there is every chance the facility has indeed been attacked by rivals. Or it could just be a downed transmitter.

There are some facts missing from the rather self-important client brief. There is an implication that the research facility is engaged in some kind of pharmaceuticals work but nothing is explicitly stated. If the Travellers think to ask the client will not go into details but will grudgingly supply more information. The mercenaries do not really need to know exactly what the facility is doing but it is entirely reasonable for them to want to know if there will be biohazards at the facility or what they should be looking for when they get there.

If pushed, the client will venture some basic information about the nature of the facility and its staff but try to avoid giving away any information it does not have to. This may come across as suspicious but it is common for clients to be cagey in the highly competitive research sector. The Travellers may become convinced that the researchers have created or unleashed a monster or that they are going to be used as test subjects for some hideous mutated organism.

In fact, the mission is more or less as presented, although there are complications. The facility was indeed attacked by mercenaries serving a rival corporation. There was, at that point, no monster or sinister experimentation. However, some of the intruders became exposed to an experimental substance grown from lichen and have become addicted to it. They are still at the facility, holding the surviving scientists hostage. The intruders are in an unstable state and becoming increasingly erratic. Once the mercenaries arrive they will have to rescue the survivors and try not to cause additional damage to the facility.

The Randell Mountains Facility

The Randell Mountains research facility is a small, purpose-built installation in a sheltered valley lying over 100 kilometres from the nearest town and far from the planet's starport. There are no roads in or out, although there are tracks in the valley made by the scientists' ground vehicles. Support and supply has been by grav truck since the facility was completed.

The installation houses 10 scientists and research assistants, plus four support staff. These are an administrator, a robotics handler, a 'culinary services consultant' and a single security expert. The facility has operated for over 10 years without incident and during that time the scars left by building work have faded. Local vegetation has grown back although it is controlled by a groundskeeper robot and overall the facility looks like it has always been there.

The location was chosen because of its inaccessibility, in theory ensuring no inquisitive locals wander in. More importantly, the site was selected for the availability of organisms with some interesting properties. A nearby cave formation was found to be home to unusual lichen-like growths. Lichens and similar organisms are symbiotic, combining algae or cyanobacteria and fungi to mutual benefit, and initial research suggested that these growths could be modified into new pharmaceuticals or food products. The facility was set up to extract and experiment upon these organisms, which have promising applications in a number of fields from disease treatment to high-value survival rations. No patents or marketable products have come out of the facility yet but there is steady and satisfactory movement towards this goal.

The research installation was provided with two ground vehicles – one an SUV and the other a pickup truck built on the same chassis – and a pair of standard air/rafts. The trucks are used for routine work in the valley and have carved out trails over the years as they moved to and from remote sensor sites or points of interest. The air/rafts range more widely, with exploration of the mountains ongoing in the hope of finding more unusual organisms.

The site long ago fell into a comfortable working rhythm, with support staff frequently operating outside their official remit. Thus the 'culinary consultant', normally responsible for running the site's mostly-automated kitchen, frequently piloted an air/raft on sample collection trips or exploration missions into the mountains. The routine of monitoring the local environment with emplaced sensors, collecting samples from the nearby caves and investigating their properties is occasionally broken by exploration of other cave systems. The scientists and their helpers were not expert spelunkers and were careful not to get in somewhere they could not get out, restricting activities to exploration of the easily accessible parts of each cave system.

The Facility: Details

The facility is surrounded by a neatly-kept area of grass, from which most of the shrubs and trees have been removed. The remainder are trimmed and obviously prized for their decorative nature. At the edge of the lawn – there really is no other word for it – is a set of white-painted edge markers. Beyond this the local vegetation is obviously kept under control but is not a garden. A dirt track, which appears to have been levelled off but not otherwise treated, runs away from the installation's buildings. There is a large vegetable patch behind these structures.

The facility consists of four main buildings and five smaller living quarters. All are simple, rectangular buildings with a gently sloping roof, connected by a typical utilities tube carrying water, sewage, power and communications cables. Tubes of this sort are robust and protected against most hazards like nibbling wildlife. As is normal, the tube is half-buried and runs in a ring/star arrangement between the structures. It does not appear to be broken at any point.

The five living quarters buildings are identical, although with different personal items inside. Each consists of an entry hall that doubles as a ridiculously tiny kitchenette, a fresher, a common dwelling room and three bedrooms each with a small stowage space. Facility staff come and go over time but most stay for at least a couple of years, so the living quarters tend to take on the character of those who use them. Most are fairly cluttered but orderly, sometimes with bits of dismantled scientific equipment on the coffee table or other evidence of work-brought-home.

The primary structure is a command and utilities centre. It is the only multi-level building in this facility, with an underground level containing the reactor and a small upper floor housing the communications and monitoring equipment. A large antenna on the roof seems intact, suggesting the problem may not be a downed transmitter. The ground floor is the base's nerve centre. It has general-purpose offices that see intermittent use, a briefing room and a security office with what passes for an armoury built into it. In addition to the security expert's advanced combat rifle, the facility was issued a carbine and a shotgun, plus four semi-automatic pistols. Until recently they never left the armoury.

Alongside the primary structure is the social centre of the facility. This contains a dining room and semi-automated kitchen plus a large storage area for preserved food. The scientists long ago began augmenting their diet with home-grown vegetables and fruits collected from around the valley. Someone has created quite an inventive array of pickles and preserves from the local produce, most of which are quite good. The social centre also has a gym and a configurable chamber which seems to have been turned into a tiny cinema.

The equipment and vehicle garage stands close to the end of the trail but as is common with such buildings it has been used less and less over the years. Vehicles are normally parked on the grass outside unless they are in for maintenance. There is a reasonably well equipped vehicle workshop inside the building, which also serves as a robot maintenance bay. The base's cleaning robots are housed in charging pods along with the much larger grounds maintenance robot. This rather threatening device is equipped with interchangeable saws, spikes and digging blades and runs a regular tidy-and-improve circuit on the grounds. It has been reprogrammed to grow vegetables as well as decorative plants and will continue to sally forth with strimmer and hoe until someone cancels its task.

The fourth major structure is the scientific centre. This large building has several labs, all of them biosecure, and a central conference/working area. There are decontamination facilities at the entrance and an internal hazmat area as well as a small medical bay. The labs are all working on various aspects of the curious lichens discovered nearby. In some cases this is sample analysis or culturing of batches, whilst other labs seem to be trying to create drugs of foodstuffs. The scientists have a ration-block production machine and a set of protein vats growing foul-smelling grey paste familiar to anyone who has prepared survival or military rations. This high-food-value paste is the basis for most super-compact rations and if treated correctly it can be made more or less edible.

If the Travellers get the chance to look over the project notes they will not be able to figure much of it out. There is no simple summary at the top of the page – this is an ongoing project run by experts who know very well what they are trying to achieve. However, buried in the science-speak are indications that the scientists think their lichen extract could be added to ration blocks to give them additional benefits. At present these barely-edible blocks are sufficient to keep someone alive, but there is a real possibility the lichen extract will promote healing and general well-being. This would be of great benefit to someone in such a predicament they had to survive on emergency rations.

Some of the drug applications are similar. It appears the lichen extract promotes soft-tissue healing and boosts immune responses. Some notes suggest it may have an anagathic effect, slowing or even reversing the aging effect. Experiments are in their early stages, but there are batches of drugs in cryogenic storage ready to be shipped out for trials at a more extensive medical laboratory. Anyone with even a basic knowledge of drug development should realise it would be unwise to try any of these – they are experimental preparations, not pharmaceuticals ready for the field.

The Drugs

The pharmaceuticals being developed do indeed show great promise but it is early days as yet. There are some serious side effects that need to be examined and hopefully eliminated. One of these is a tendency to be extremely addictive. This is particularly obvious in the edible version. Someone who ate the ration blocks currently stockpiled for testing would see positive health benefits but would also become completely dependent on them. This is unfortunate, since someone did eat them.

The drug preparations will not have any significant benefits in their present form but will probably be harmless. A small percentage of people might have an allergic reaction and some others might experience a craving for the ration blocks but the drugs themselves are not likely to cause a problem if taken. They are in low concentrations for testing, so a huge amount would have to be consumed to have any real effects.

The drugs require a regular supply of fresh lichen, necessitating regular trips to the caves. It will survive for a time in the artificial environment set up in the lab but something is not quite right for it there. This is one reason the scientists are so interested in the local environment. Constant monitoring of the air, water and other conditions might eventually lead to an understanding of how the lichen can be grown artificially.

The Attack

The 14 people at the installation were going about their normal business as they had for years when two air/rafts entered the valley. They set down on the grass outside the facility and disgorged half a dozen gunmen. Two more remained behind to protect the transports. The gunmen were professional mercenaries, in body armour and armed with military weapons. They stormed towards the control and lab buildings, whose occupants locked the doors and tried to call for help. Their transmissions were jammed.

The doors held for a couple of minutes, after which the gunmen were inside. They rounded up everyone they could find and detained them in the leisure building. The transmitter was put out of action, personnel were identified and the mercenaries began collecting samples and research material. No shots were fired.

Up to this point the operation had gone perfectly; clean and efficient. The mercenaries' orders were to kidnap two critical scientists who were to be interrogated for a few days then released – this was a corporate espionage mission, not a trade war – whilst data would be conveyed to the competitor that had authorised the mission. There was no reason why anything would go awry but somehow it did.

The mercenaries were at the installation for a few hours, during which time two of them were exposed to a compound derived from the lichen. One of the researchers deliberately permitted herself and two of the mercenaries to come into contact with a concentrated form of the lichen's active ingredient. Two more of the mercenaries were inadvertently exposed soon afterward.

Within a few minutes all five were acting strangely, displaying increasing levels of paranoia and, after a time, a craving for the lichen extract. It is not clear what the researcher was trying to achieve; perhaps she hoped to disable the mercenaries so they could be overpowered. The Travellers might find this idea laughable but a scientist with no clue how the world of violence works might think it possible.

The effects of intoxication with the extract grew worse, eventually leading to a violent confrontation between the exposed mercenaries and some of the scientists. Intervention by the other mercenaries – to protect their prisoners – left one of the infected mercenaries dead and one of the non-infected wounded. At this point the mercenary leader decided to withdraw with the data his team had already gathered. Unable to get their colleagues to leave, the uninfected mercenaries withdrew in their air/rafts and abandoned their comrades. They did not take any scientists with them.

The infected mercenaries tried to force the scientists to cure them or give them more of the compound, eventually killing some of the installation staff. They resorted to eating vast quantities of the prepared ration blocks. Unable to get to those, the infected scientist took one of the facility's air/rafts to the caves and began eating the lichen found there.

The Current Situation

At present, about half the installation staff are still alive. They are being held in the leisure building or forced to work in the labs, always under the guns of paranoid and confused mercenaries. The lab is badly trashed and efforts to reverse the infection have come to nothing. There has been a side effect that might be of interest under other circumstances; the infected mercenaries (and the scientist but she is rather less dangerous) are extremely resilient and will heal from non-fatal injuries in an incredibly short time. This is not 'regeneration' of damaged tissue; it is a greatly accelerated form of the body's own functions, which imposes enormous stress on the subject's life processes. A broken bone will begin to heal before it can be set; a wound will clot and lost blood will be replaced but this can happen only by breaking down other tissues. The effects are grotesque and irreversible.

The scientist might perhaps be saved if her colleagues can find a way to expunge the intoxication. In the meantime she is deranged and combative, desperate to claw as much lichen off the cave walls as possible. She cannot be reasoned with but is not much of a physical threat if the Travellers locate her. The mercenaries are a much more serious threat and there is something none of the survivors at the installation know. The 'dead' infected mercenary was placed in one of the living quarters buildings but is in fact not deceased as such. Despite wounds that would have killed a normal person – and which appeared to have done so – the mercenary's body has been cannibalising its own tissues to repair the damage. He is now a mass of scar tissue, functioning on instinct alone, but is still capable of using weapons.

Playing out the Ticket

The Travellers' remit is vague, since the client does not know what is happening at the facility. It should be obvious to them that they need to rescue as many of the scientists as possible, secure the facility and deal with the intruders. How that plays out is very much up to the Travellers.

There is little outward sign of the attack when the Travellers arrive, although the installation may seem a little too quiet. The mercenaries might have a brush with the grounds-keeper robot if the Referee wants a red herring or an embarrassing reaction fire incident. The intruders at the facility are paranoid but not really very rational. They may monitor the external sensors out of habit and will certainly be aware of the Travellers if they make contact by radio. If this happens the intruders will lock up the facility staff and take up defensive positions. They will open fire without warning.

It is possible that the Travellers may have to deal with a situation where an unknown number of hostiles are in the installation, with hostages – or captives; the intruders are not really rational enough to bargain or threaten the staff. The staff might get loose and try to escape or take on the intruders, which could lead to all manner of complications.

Alternatively, the Travellers might catch the intruders by surprise and take them out easily. This is their reward for good preparation and reconnaissance. Even so, they might be surprised by the emergence of the 'dead' intruder, shambling around like some kind of disfigured mutant. The other intruders might – just possibly – be persuaded to surrender if the Travellers can get through to them somehow. The 'dead' one cannot be reasoned with.

Once the installation is secure, it is a simple matter to call for assistance. The planetary authorities will arrive in due course but in the meantime the Travellers might consider going after the escaped scientist and capturing/rescuing her. This is part of their remit to secure the facility and its personnel but could be left to the authorities if the Travellers are feeling lazy.

Ticket Success Indicators

Although it is meant to be played out like a standard adventure, this contract does still have a set of Ticket Success Indicator criteria. The Travellers will need to satisfy these if they are to get paid

1: IMPORTANT: Eliminate or capture the intruders.
2: IMPORTANT: Secure the facility and save the staff.
3: ROUTINE: Do not cause additional damage to the facility.
4: ROUTINE: Locate the missing scientist and recover her alive.
5: ROUTINE: Establish exactly what happened here.

The maximum TSI achievable on this ticket is 12. Trigger-happy mercenaries might cause more damage to the facility than the original attack, which will greatly displease the client.

Opposition

The Travellers will be up against heavily armed mercenaries who are paranoid, irrational and capable of taking much more damage than a normal person would without going down. This is reflected in an inflated END value and reduced INT and EDU.

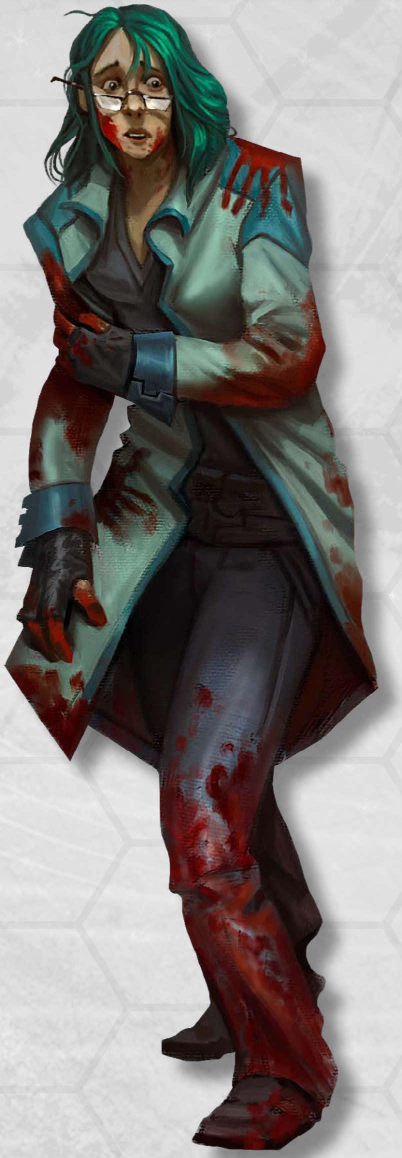
THREE PARANOID INTRUDERS

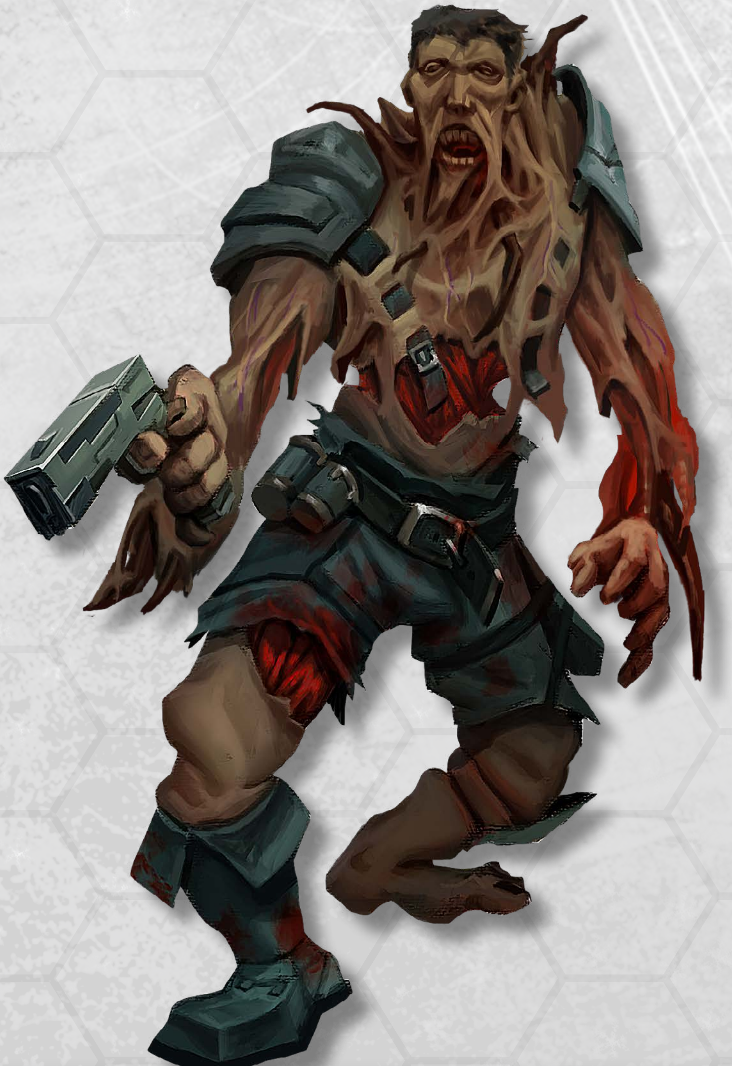
SPECIES				GENDER	AGE
—				—	—
STR	9	INT	4	SKILLS	
DEX	8	EDU	2	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1	
END	21	SOC	6		
EQUIPMENT	Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope), Autopistol (3D-3)				
ARMOUR	Rigid Torso Protector, Helmet, Limb Plates (+8)				

SLIGHTLY ALIVE INTRUDER

SPECIES				GENDER	AGE
—				Male	—
STR	11	INT	2	SKILLS	
DEX	4	EDU	1	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1	
END	28	SOC	6		
EQUIPMENT				Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope), Autopistol (3D-3)	
ARMOUR				Rigid Torso Protector, Helmet, Limb Plates (+8)	

This intruder regains 1D END each round of combat once injured, for 2D rounds. After this the strain is too much for the intruder's body and he collapses for 1D hours, appearing to be dead. He will then rise once more, with END reduced by 2D permanently. Once END reaches a permanent value of 0, death finally occurs.





STRAY SCIENTIST

SPECIES				GENDER	AGE
—				Female	—
STR	3	INT	4	WEAPONS	
DEX	9	EDU	2	Broken Nails (D3)	
END	11	SOC	9		

The stray scientist has been exposed to the lichen compound and desperately craves it. She is in a similar state to the paranoid intruders and cannot be reasoned with. Fortunately, she is no fighter. Anyone scratched with a broken, lichen-covered nail might be exposed to the raw form of the compound but this is unlikely to have any effects unless the Referee wishes to extend the adventure.

OBSERVE AND REPORT

Warfighter, Company. Cr500000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The conflict on Merrain is going through another 'hot' phase, with skirmishing in several regions as the Merrain Federation consolidates its hold over them. The situation is well in hand but the forces of the Federation are stretched thin. This may give its enemies a chance to strike. It has therefore been decided to turn over the pacification of the target regions to mercenary forces whilst the army of the Federation refits, trains and prepares to repel any acts of aggression against its new or traditional territories.

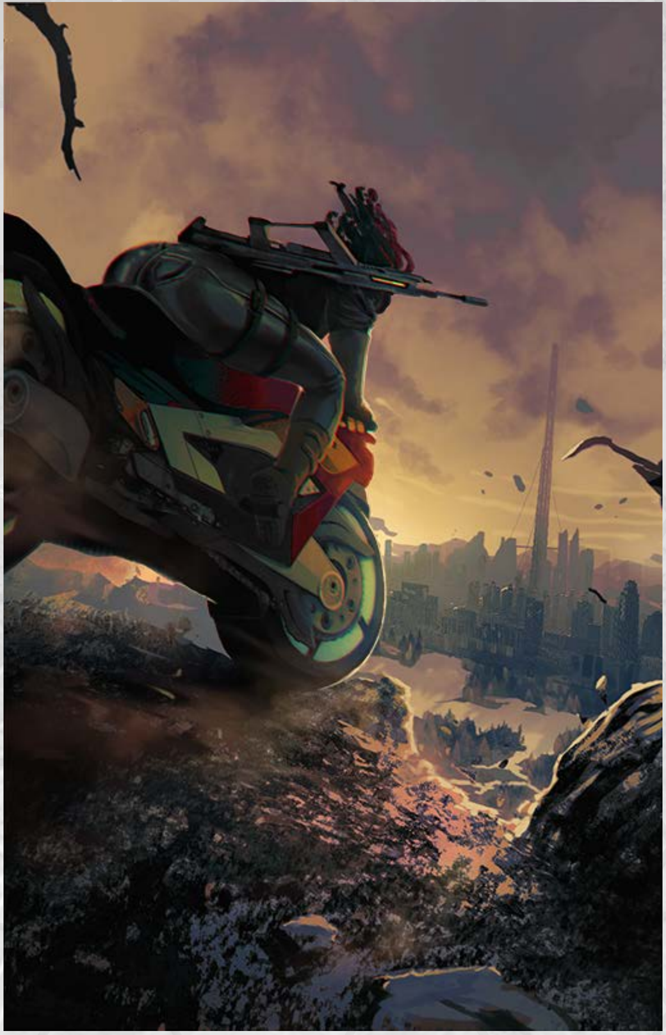
The Merrain Federation is offering Cr500000 per month plus a completion bonus of Cr500000 to MCr1 for company-sized forces to operate for at least three months in each of the troubled regions. In this instance the contract relates to the region within 250 kilometres in all directions from the city-state of Bildake, which contains several small towns but only one city. Forces will be expected to locate and eliminate the remnants the Bildake military and ensure the city itself remains secure.

The city-state of Bildake originally fielded an infantry battalion with artillery support, three mobile companies with some light armoured vehicles and a citizens' militia with no significant fighting power. These forces were broken and driven from the city. Some have dispersed but a remnant of unknown size remains at large. Combat is to be expected wherever these remnants are encountered.

Referee's Information

Apart from the fact that this was another of the Merrain Federation's wars of expansion, most of the information given is correct. The city-state was provoked until an incident occurred, then invaded in a 'defensive retaliatory action'. The city is currently under occupation by a battalion of Merrain infantry that is due to pull out when the mercenaries arrive. The city itself will be secured by a specialist formation – the Federation has discovered a need for such units in its recent wars of conquest – and the mercenaries will share a base with this force. Their remit is to mop up the surrounding countryside and assist as necessary in the city.

The Travellers will have to carry out their mission but the adventure presented here focuses on an incident that occurs along the way. The wider picture will be resolved like any other ticket whilst the actions of the reconnaissance party will be resolved using the standard *Traveller* rules. At the end of the contract the unit's success is based upon its ability to do what the client wants, rather than the outcome of the adventure. However, failure in the adventure can have consequences for the unit as a whole. Overall, this adventure is an example of how a standard *Traveller* adventure can be woven into a mercenary ticket.



Bildake City

The situation in Bildake is tense but on the whole quiet. The Merrain Federation has long experience at pacifying its conquests, using a balance of incentives and deterrents. At present it is working through the usual system, announcing investment and fixes for problems that have plagued the city for years. Money has been dumped into the local coffers to pay for a programme of infrastructure improvements and already there are crews out fixing roads and restoring power. A distinctly illegal but highly effective purge of criminals who are known but cannot be prosecuted for lack of evidence is underway, whilst popular causes are being championed. The Federation portrays itself as a liberating force, sweeping in to remove the old ineffectual or corrupt regime and generally making things better for everyone. There is some truth in this but ultimately the measures are about control rather than improvement.

The outgoing force is a standard motorised infantry battalion, slightly degraded by combat during the fight for the city. Its personnel are experienced, professional and a cut above the usual backwater-planet soldiery the Travellers may have met in the past. They took some losses capturing the city and did some damage but the war was already won when the force arrived. A token defence was swept aside without difficulty. As a result the city is not heavily damaged. It has not been shelled or bombed and most of the damage to its power distribution network stemmed from a surgical strike to take out the main substation. This is under repair and will be operational in a few days. In the meantime, power is patchy and prone to brownouts.

There will be little resistance within the city whilst the Travellers are there, although there is always the possibility of a small raid or a riot. Mostly these matters can be left to the occupation company, which arrives just before the Travellers' unit. This force is also highly professional and specially trained to win over an occupied population whilst stomping hard on any resistance. The Travellers should not need to get involved.

The Countryside

Bildake City is located at a natural crossing-point for the river Agade, with road and rail bridges connecting the city to a small settlement on the far bank. The links that run through the city are important to other city-states and the Merrain Federation itself – which was one reason for the conquest. The bridges are intact but closed for the time being. Nobody really wants to take a train ride through a war zone.

The armed forces of Bildake City made their stand a few kilometres short of the city, on a natural defensive line formed by rising ground. Most of the force was committed here and rapidly overrun by the more mobile and highly experienced Federation brigade sent against them. If the Travellers want to study the engagement they can but there is little to be learned. It was a typical kerb-stomping carried out by a more powerful and larger force that could afford to put as much around each flank as the defenders had in their entire position.

The battle was over in four hours, with virtually the whole Bildake force captured. Their personnel are currently housed in a temporary camp about 200 kilometres away from the city. They are not being mistreated and indeed plans are already in motion to use these surrendered forces in a campaign against a different opponent. This is part of the Federation's masterplan for conquest of the whole planet – serving the Federation is preferable to mooching about a camp with nothing to do and ultimately brings privileges and rewards.

The remainder of the Bildake armed forces are scattered in small pockets, typically no more than a platoon or two and have no overall leadership. Some will try to carry on the fight, some are looking for an excuse to surrender and most are just waiting for direction. Locating these forces will be more of a problem than defeating them.

Fulfilling the Contract

In order to fulfil this contract the Travellers will need to search for the enemy forces then neutralise them. This means sending out reconnaissance groups, using drones or whatever other methods the Travellers decide are most appropriate to the search. Finding any given group can be abstracted as an Operation, in which a serious mishap suggests the reconnaissance group blundered into an ambush or an encounter battle. It is highly unlikely the Travellers will be able to deploy their force en masse for the search as this will take too long for the client to accept and a whole company is likely to be detected by the targets. The Bildake forces will retire or flee if confronted with a superior force.

A more viable tactic is to use platoons or parts of a platoon – perhaps even just one or two vehicles – for reconnaissance with an on-call reserve available to reinforce any that find trouble. It might even be possible to search without the targets realising they have been found, which creates additional opportunities. The Travellers may be able to surround a located enemy force or to cut off its retreat, which has advantages in terms of combat and also in any negotiations that take place. The client would much prefer surrender to elimination, for several reasons. The Federation prefers to be seen as benign and massacres will undermine this impression, which makes it less likely that other enemies will surrender in the future. Similarly, surrendered forces can sometimes be co-opted, which strengthens the Federation – or at least causes the burden of casualties to fall on 'allied' troops rather than the Federation's own units.

In most cases it will be possible to negotiate a surrender, possibly after a token resistance. Clashes between fast-moving forces will make this impossible, so there will probably be some nasty skirmishes during the mopping-up phase. However, the contract is not all that hard to fulfil. It should be largely abstracted but still played out in some detail, not least to conceal from the Travellers that there is an adventure unfolding.

Ticket Success Indicators

The contract's TSI has little to do with the adventure that a part of the force will have along the way but fulfilling these criteria is necessary to completing the contract and getting paid.

1: IMPORTANT: Locate and neutralise at least three significant groups of Bildake troops (platoon-size or larger).
2: IMPORTANT: Do not cause unnecessary casualties.
3: ROUTINE: Create a workable reconnaissance and search plan rather than moving the whole company around in a clumsy manner.
4: ROUTINE: Cooperate with Federation troops where necessary.
5: ROUTINE: Do not antagonise the civilian population.

The maximum TSI achievable on this ticket is 12. Much of the time the mercenaries will be undertaking painstaking cordon-and-sweep operations or searching settlements for signs of enemy forces. The client will expect to see a brisk but thorough search followed by well-planned operations to force a surrender or eliminate enemy forces.

Sensor Ghost

The adventure spun out of this contract will involve a small part of the Travellers' force, possibly a reconnaissance team or a command element on the way to deal with a situation developing elsewhere. The team picks up or is advised of some unusual sensor readings in their vicinity. As the nearest representatives of the Travellers' unit they are in a position to investigate far more quickly than anyone else. Danger should be minimal since this area has already been swept for holdouts early in the campaign. There is always the chance of an encounter but no large enemy forces are thought to be in the vicinity.

Sensor readings seem to be emanating from a disused copper mine not far away. There are intermittent low-power radio emissions as well as what might be a power signature. The mine has been abandoned for decades, since the promising veins near the surface were played out and deeper ore proved uneconomical to extract. The Travellers could just fly a grav vehicle to the mine and have a look around but this is a war zone. Hopefully they know enough to make a covert approach; if not they will run into trouble.

The mine was largely stripped of its machinery when it closed down but some of the equipment was too bulky to be easily removed. Gantries and frameworks remain in place, along with a large ore chute that was once used to fill trucks. This, combined with the large amount of copper fragments in the mine tailings, creates a cluttered sensor environment. In the immediate context this means that the Travellers' sensors will not work well, for exactly the same reason the site was chosen as a covert arms dump.

Invasion by the Merrain Federation has been on the cards for years now and various initiatives were launched to forestall or resist it. Most came to nothing but one did get to a halfway stage. A few months ago the ruling council of Bildake City arranged for an independent merchant vessel to deliver weaponry. It was deemed unwise to allow the Federation to know about this, since it is prone to use any pretext it can find for an invasion. Even buying defensive systems could be seen as provocation and Bildake did not want to give the Federation a reason to accelerate its plans. It was hoped the weaponry could be landed covertly and picked up by forces in the area 'on exercise' without anyone knowing it was present. The new capabilities of the Bildake military would be showcased when the time was right.

Unfortunately, this plan went awry at almost every stage. The free trader crew who were supposed to be making the delivery ran into unexpected difficulties and have only just arrived, whilst the commander tasked with taking receipt of the equipment was captured in battle on the first day of the invasion. As a result, there is a starship on the ground at the mine, a part-unloaded cargo of weapons and ammunition waiting for pickup, and nobody there to meet them.

The Free Trader Janalonga

The free trader Janalonga made planetfall in the early hours of the morning, following directions to a landing site that should be secure and is hard to mistake. However, since there has been no contact with the recipients the crew are becoming nervous and wondering if they have somehow found a different disused copper mine. They are regretting their decision to start unloading and currently arguing about what to do next.

The cargo consists of 12 tons of TL9 small arms and light support weapons, plus an assortment of fittings and mountings that will permit quick and easy upgrade of locally-made vehicles. Had the weaponry arrived on time, the forces of Bildake might have been able to hold their own. As it is, ownership of this weaponry is… questionable.

The free trader crew were paid up front to obtain and deliver the weaponry. This would not normally seem like a good idea but the city council were getting desperate. Legally, the weaponry belongs to a city council that has been overthrown. A case could be made for it being legitimate spoils of war and thus belonging to the Federation government but the free trader crew might argue that the city council has voided its end of the contract by ceasing to exist, in which case the cargo does not have a legal owner and might count as salvage. The crew could load the crates back aboard their ship and sell it elsewhere.

Whilst the legalities are interesting the real question is one of possession. The free trader crew are currently in possession but perhaps not for long. A small Bildaken force, perhaps a platoon in size, is heading for the drop-off-point. They have been informed of the delivery and intend to take possession. Whilst not a game-changer in the conflict the introduction of TL9 weapons will mean increased casualties among Federation forces and their mercenaries and could fuel a brief resurgence of the conflict. Ultimately there is little chance of liberating Bildake city but having to turn forces around, cancel their refit and rest, and essentially fight the same war all over again would be embarrassing for the Federation which would impact their willingness to pay bonuses to the mercenaries.

If the mercenaries do not act quickly the Bildake force will reach the free trader and take possession of the weaponry. They will dig in and be soon joined by other remnants of the Bildake armed forces, creating a reinforced company-sized battlegroup. This will be a tough challenge for the Travellers' unit and one they are expected to take on. Preventing the Bildake force from reaching the mine is the logical choice but the only force available is the recon team. They can, of course, call for reinforcements but the initial effort will fall upon them.

Dealing with the Free Trader

The free trader crew are typical small-time entrepreneurs. They do not want to be involved in a gun battle with mercenaries or caught in the middle of one. They can be persuaded – fairly easily – to simply take off and fly away. This is especially so if the crew have some of the weapons still aboard their ship or are permitted to load some aboard. They have done what they were paid for and can sell TL9 small arms as a bonus. This is a deal that will not be difficult to sell.

The free trader crew can also be scared off by a demonstration of force. A few near-misses from a sniper they cannot find will be enough, more than likely. This is a situation where the Travellers will benefit from restraint. The crew will run for their ship and escape if they think they are in danger but if some of them are killed they may decide to turn their vessel's laser turret on suspected enemy locations. The recon party cannot fight a starship and a platoon of TL7 troops and are much better off finding a way to get the ship to retire rather than battling it out.

Dealing with the Bildake Force

The Bildake force consists of stragglers gathered together by an enterprising young captain. She commands most of an infantry platoon, which has been augmented with whatever personnel she could rally. These include cooks, mechanics and a few people orphaned from other units. The force as a whole possesses three trucks, a light off-road vehicle used by the platoon commander and an armoured car equipped with an autocannon. They are short of ammunition but willing to fight and see the acquisition of the weapons drop as a chance to save their homeland. This is a bit optimistic but will drive this rag-tag force to make a determined effort.

A platoon, even without light armoured support, is a lot for a recon group to take on. Even with a good technological advantage the mercenaries might be overmatched. If they just pile in and try to fight it out the battle can be resolved as normal and the Travellers may well lose. They do, however, have other options.

The approaching force can be viewed as a problem to solve rather than an enemy to be overcome. The Travellers do not need to defeat this force and may not need to fight at all. What they do need to do is to prevent it from taking possession of the weapons before reinforcements can arrive. To do so the Bildake force needs to get to the mine site, secure it and unpack the weaponry. This will take time and can be delayed by smart Travellers.

One option would be to harass the enemy as they reach the drop site. Sniper fire, however inaccurate, will make it very difficult to get shipping containers open, extract weapons crates and begin setting equipment up. A sneaky recon group might split up, some elements making an attack then slipping away whilst others move into a new position. The Bildake force has limited manpower and can be kept rushing around chasing ghosts, severely impact its ability to deploy the weapons. This is a risky strategy, since there is a chance of contact between a handful of the Travellers and a superior force but it can work.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Scratch Bildake Force	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	4	–1
CEI or DEI	6	–1
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	8	0

An alternative would be to delay the approach of the Bildake force by harassing fire, booby traps, obstacles on the road and the illusion of a much greater force. The Bildake commander cannot know what level of force she is up against and is unwilling to just charge through to the target. She can be induced to deploy and begin careful fire-and-manoeuvres to remove a blocking force, perhaps never realising there are only a few hostiles in her path. A series of contacts, with the Travellers pulling back in between, could delay the Bildake force for many hours. Each deployment into fighting order will take time, as will manoeuvres against suspected hostile positions. The Bildake force cannot be certain the Travellers have gone once they cease fire, which imposes further delay. The force must then regroup, get back in its vehicles and begin its advance once again.

Other gambits include using powerful weapons to cripple the trucks, perhaps by shooting the engine block. Destruction will also work but a single shot from a gauss rifle or similar weapon could put a truck out of action and force the enemy to reorganise or advance on foot. Obstacles, mines and improvised roadside bombs will have a similar effect.

Resolution

As always, this situation rewards Travellers who think creatively rather than just making combat rolls. They do not have to win the fight to achieve success but do need to prevent the enemy from achieving their goals until reinforcements arrive. Stealth, deception and clever manoeuvres can achieve this with relatively little bloodshed.

If the mercenaries take possession of some or all of the weaponry, there may be questions to answer. The Merrain Federation might consider the shipment to be its properly since it has conquered the city that brought it in. It will certainly try to get the Travellers to hand over the weapons if word gets out. The mercenaries could make a good case for ‘spoils of war’ and keep the lot or they might hand over some equipment and keep the best for themselves. This might take the form of a negotiation between the Travellers and their client, possibly one that requires arbitration by the licensing body.

CHAPTER - NINE

BROKERS AND DEALERS

The Referee can invent all manner of arms firms, mercenary licensing agencies and the like. A selection are presented here as examples.

LICENSING AGENCIES

Some licensing agencies exist solely for that purpose but most are business or political entities. Some have political motivations and will seek to further their agenda by influencing where mercenaries do and do not operate.

Mereditia Security Services (MSS)

MSS is a small-scale licencing agency with few other areas of interest. It does have several 'in-house' mercenary units, all of company size or smaller, which have proven effective in the past. Most of MSS' business comes from licensed rather than owned units. Fees to register are about average, at three times the salary budget of an average force of the size and type. The firm provides the usual legal protections and a repatriation bond for captured or surrendered mercenaries and has sufficient legal and military clout that its guarantees are respected.

MSS does not supply arms and equipment but does have a web of contacts in the marketplace. Gaining accredited status opens enough doors that a mercenary unit can usually obtain at least basic equipment of most kinds. Accreditation requires a demonstration of competence in addition to the fee. MSS requires an inspection of the unit whilst carrying out basic training such as small arms handling and small unit tactical exercises. This can be abstracted by a CEI check in most cases. Accreditation with MSS does not carry any particular kudos but does indicate the unit is a professional outfit and fit for purpose.

The in-house mercenary units operated by MSS are widely respected for their professionalism and competence. Most are light infantry or security formations but MSS has a small artillery, aerospace defence and communications contingent that can be subcontracted by mercenary forces requiring specialist support. The firm does not provide training services to affiliated mercenary units.

The Division

The Division is more properly named the 1st Independent Lift Infantry Division and is one of the few permanently embodied mercenary forces in brigade strength or greater. The Division itself is a lift infantry force with associated artillery, aerospace defence, combat engineering and armoured formations plus a full array of supporting assets. It occasionally deploys en masse but more commonly detaches battalions or reinforced brigades to trouble spots across the region.

The Division has become a household name in the mercenary marketplace; sufficiently so that it operates as a licensing agency for other mercenary units and even has a full-service training facility. This is used by the Division's own personnel when necessary but also produces drafts of fully trained mercenaries on a regular basis. The best of them find berths with the Division itself, whilst even those who do not make the grade are well enough regarded that they are snapped up by lesser formations.

The Division has strict requirements of professionalism, equipping levels and general competence for its affiliated units and requires regular recertification in addition to an initial accreditation process. Recertification is typically less formal than elsewhere, with a Division liaison team joining a unit on deployment for a couple of weeks and making a simple yes/no report based upon their impressions. There are no formal criteria, on the grounds that the best mercenary unit in the field knows a good force when it sees one. This is enough for most clients and affiliates, and there is no appeals process.

Affiliation with The Division typically impresses clients and opponents alike. The Travellers may claim DM+1 on negotiations where their reputation is relevant. This comes at a price however; the fee for attempting to become an affiliate is – successfully or otherwise – six times the monthly salary budget for the force. The mercenaries will be required to demonstrate a high level of capability, which typically means undertaking a difficult operation with a liaison team looking over their shoulders.

Akasi Shipping Incorporated

Akasi Shipping is best known for its interstellar freighting business but acquired a large security and 'route protection' arm by way of a convoluted process. This required setting up garrisons of corporate mercenaries at key points on its trade lanes and acquiring small warships for escort work. With all the paperwork and legal filings done, the framework was in place to allow independent units to be accredited. This has become a major side line for Akasi Shipping.

The firm's entry requirements are not high, being little more than a token demonstration of competence and a fee equivalent to a month's salaries. Oversight is loose as well and it is possible to assume the firm does not care what happens so long as the money comes in on time. This is incorrect; Akasi stakes its good name on the mercenaries it accredits and has some of the most aggressive lawyers in the field. A unit that generally gives good service and stays off the radar will be left to its own business but those that attract the wrong sort of attention are thoroughly investigated.

Akasi Shipping normally operates in the legal and business arenas, using the threat of blacklisting or a salvo of lawsuits to paralyse mercenary units that fail to meet its standards. In the worst cases the firm has enough mercenaries on call to shut down a rogue unit but would be more likely to undercut its prices and disrupt activities until the unit was forced out of business. Akasi is a respected accreditor but not one with any special kudos associated with it. Its association with the mercenary trade means that many of its freighters are capable of being rapidly converted into troopships.

The Federated Republic of Rorginn

The FRR is an unpleasant 'democratic people's republic', which is in practice none of those things. It makes extensive use of mercenary forces to do its dirty work, usually drawing them from among the pool of certified and accredited units. The FRR's standards are notoriously low, as is its accreditation fee of one month's salaries. It is one of the few mercenary licensing bodies to take part of a unit's revenue – usually 10% but sometimes more – but otherwise does not care much what its licensed mercenaries get up to.

FRR-registered mercenaries receive the usual legal protections, guaranteed in part by the government's financial and military might. The mercenary units themselves function as a sort of collective, assisting one another out of self-interest. In that, the FRR's licensing agency functions more like an extremely heavily armed organised crime gang than a corporate body. Those who mistreat mercenaries licensed by FRR may face legal action but it is just as common for the FRR's legal teams to fabricate a reason to legitimise a strike against the assets of a state or corporation that has offended them.

As might be expected, FRR-accredited mercenaries tend to be small units with a poor reputation. Those that do well usually distance themselves and find a more respectable backer but it is common to end up locked into a cycle of poorly paid and badly executed operations. Expectations of FRR-accredited mercenaries tend to be low and often clients will seek them out to perform missions more reputable formations would turn down. An FRR accreditation certificate is not meaningless but is usually taken to mean the force is barely competent and willing to take on almost any job for a surprisingly low fee.

Recruiters and Trainers

Only the largest and most affluent mercenary units can afford large-scale training facilities. Everyone else has to make do with whatever they can pull together or outsource to one of the mercenary factors operating in the region.

Full Service, Incorporated

FSI is, as its name suggests, one of the few full-service training providers in the mercenary marketplace. It mostly turns out infantry personnel with a solid grasp of small unit tactics but offers specialist and advanced training to small groups. FSI does not produce parade-ground soldiers; its personnel are familiar with a few standard drill evolutions but little beyond that. Battlefield skills tend to be reasonable to good.

FSI also supplies a limited selection of TL10 infantry equipment. Personnel use these weapons in training and often take their issued personal equipment all the way from orientation to their first deployment. For convenience, many smaller units obtain equipment packages through the firm. This ensures interoperability when working with similar formations but also means that opposing units typically have exactly the same capabilities.

FSI operates on the principle that it can get any specialist a unit wants, for the right fee. Its in-house training provides the bulk of low-end recruits but the firm also maintains a web of what amount to talent scouts among the militaries of nearby worlds. Some actively work with the scouts, others resent them and try to limit their activities. Those nearing the end of their service are offered guidance on how to invest their mustering-out pay well and where to obtain training in civilian fields, along with the option to take what amounts to orientation training for civilian life. This service is genuine and advice is solid but at the same time it establishes relationships that will sometimes benefit the company. Essentially, for a small fee FSI will help former soldiers make the transition to civilian life. Those that do not find it to their liking know where to start looking for a job in the mercenary trade and FSI will hook them up with appropriate units.

Universal Training Services

UTS is one of the largest providers of training, operating in sectors as diverse as mercenary work, corporate accounting and starship crews. It mostly operates through offices on high-population worlds, taking in hopefuls who – for a suitable fee – will eventually emerge with much-improved employment prospects. UTS is a highly professional company, although it is painfully ‘corporate’ in most ways. This means mercenaries hired out of its training academies tend to speak in the impenetrable jargon of the business world for the first few months of their new career.

One advantage of such a broad field of interest is the possibility of crossover training. Mercenary units need lawyers and accountants but the majority of people with those skills are a poor fit for the often rather rough world of the interstellar soldier of fortune. Cross-training programmes ensure that legal and administrative experts hired by the mercenary units have a solid understanding of the wider issues surrounding their legal battles and in some cases are capable of looking after themselves in the field. This is important to small units whose leaders require a multi-skillset or those formations that expect their business-side personnel to operate in forward areas if necessary.

UTS also operates a distance-learning and accreditation programme. It is common to find an academic skills package on the portacomps of mercenary units. Usually this is a subject of practical use to the force but occasionally the company marksman will decide to study astrophysics in their spare time. Some of these people make quite a splash when they arrive in an academic institution to begin a higher degree using money earned from doing professional violence. Attempts to haze the new students rarely go well.

Brassard

Brassard was once a mercenary force specialising in cadre assignments, which moved into the pre-service and in-service training sector. There is an apocryphal tale of how the company’s founder violently lost patience with the demands of a client and somehow coerced the senior members of a planetary government into joining a class of recruits sent to the force. Whilst entertainingly untrue, the story is based on Brassard’s insistence on demonstrating first-hand what is really happening in the military force it is being paid to create. Many clients find this distasteful but Brassard's leadership firmly believes that those who direct the use of force should understand what it means.

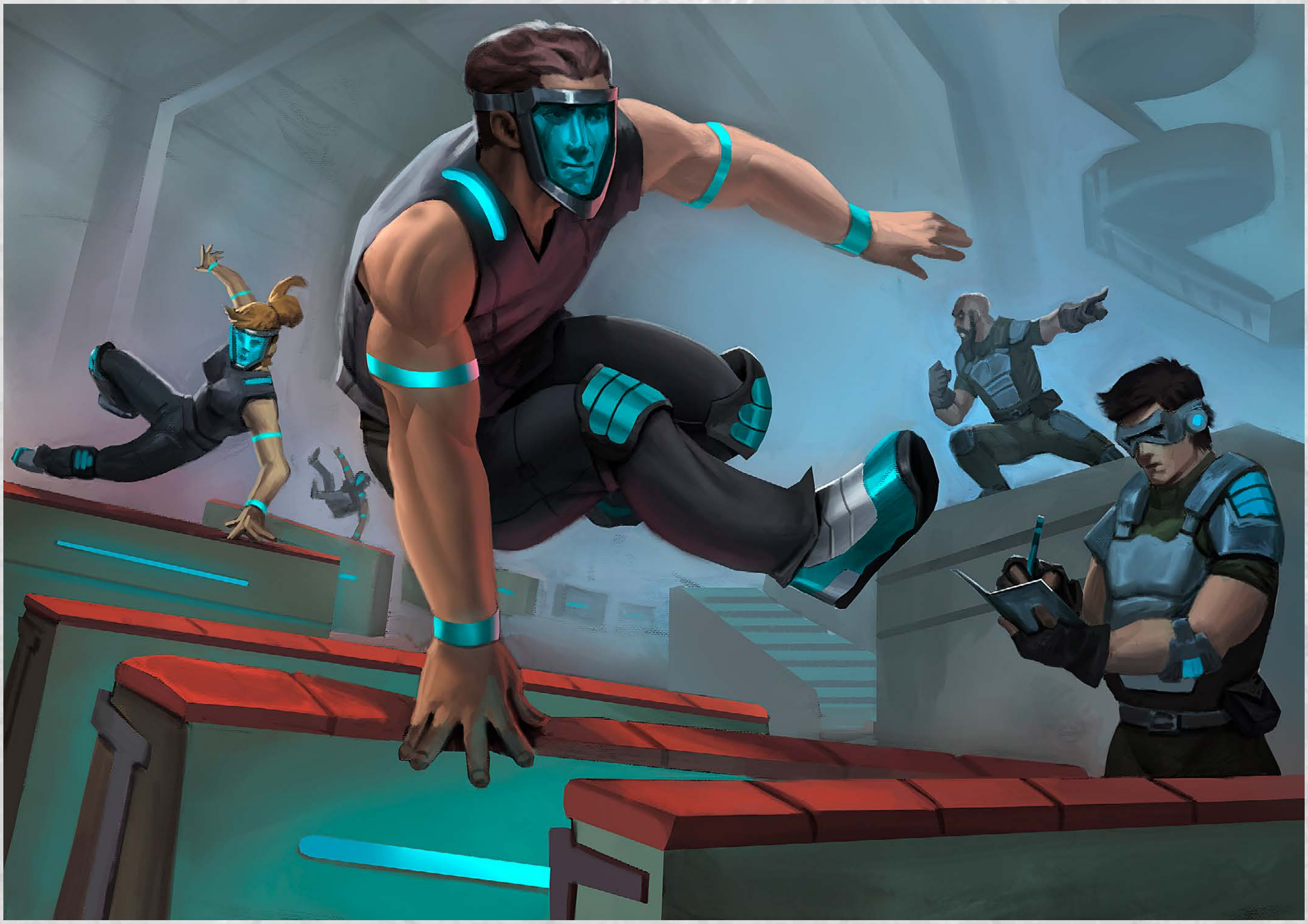
Today, Brassard operates on a three-tier system. Its offices recruit promising young people and feed them into the 'tier 3' training facilities. Meanwhile personnel with experience from mercenary or regular forces are given junior-leadership or specialist training as the core of 'tier 2' training units. These are bulked out with graduates of tier 3 to create training formations. Some of these take the field as complete companies but this is rare. More commonly a tier 2 unit is broken up to provide drafts of personnel to those who need them. Tier 1 training is provided by in-the-field mentoring teams or formal education packages for officers of captain rank and above.

Brassard is capable of forming a complete infantry, light armoured or specialist company to order and can build larger formations at need. Quality may not be high if this is done in a hurry but a client who is capable of planning ahead can place an order, pay a fee and wait for its mercenary force to arrive. The firm does not supply arms to outsiders but can arrange for a formation it creates to be outfitted at the client's expense.

Brassard still operates a few cadre teams but these are now specialists. In addition to mentoring units sent to mercenary clients, Brassard provides advisors and liaison officers to governments and other clients, often providing liaison with non-Brassard mercenary units. Its investigative branch is respected but not greatly liked in the mercenary field as the go-to independent body when legal matters arise or accusations are made.

The Gariner Academy

The Gariner Academy is more of a staff college and command school than general training installation. It does provide basic training but only to officer cadets destined for the mercenary trade. Those who fail officer qualifications are offered a chance to side line into the specialist and technical training programmes, ending up as mid-level non-commissioned officers. Enlisted specialists are also trained by the academy but only personnel with experience are taken into these programmes.



The Academy does not handle large-scale recruitment but maintains good relations with many units containing its graduates. Personnel who want to enter the mercenary marketplace but who do not meet the standards for graduation as officers or specialists are often recommended to friendly units and offered a short conversion course intended to take them from not-good-enough officer candidates to effective enlisted mercenaries. Some come back later and pick up their studies and in many cases a Gariner washout takes away enough extra skills to be a desirable hire. There are a few quite senior mercenary officers who started out with a Gariner Academy basic training and officer's orientation, joined a unit and learned on the job.

The Academy does not operate mercenary combat units of its own but does hire out staff as advisors to clients and mercenary forces, and as investigators or observers. Security for these personnel, especially observers in dangerous forward areas, is provided by officer cadets on secondment and may be the only practical experience a new graduate has.

Arms Brokers

Most mercenary commanders would agree that after effective communications equipment, the most desirable thing is a reliable source of ammunition. Sometimes a unit is forced to obtain weaponry from wherever it can be found, which can lead to mismatches. This in turn impacts efficiency in the field and both the cost and difficulty of supplying the force. Some brokers will work with anyone but this is not necessarily a good thing for reputable mercenary units. A connection, even through a third party, with unwholesome elements can damage a force's reputation.

Garnet Corporation

The Garnet Corporation produces high-quality military equipment at TL14 standards. Its products are mostly grav vehicles fitted for armoured warfare or support roles, although a range of small arms and support weapons are also marketed. The corporation maintains a chain of outlets, some of which are large enough to actually have grav tanks and similar weapons on display. Most are retail-and-demonstration facilities, however, and require prospective clients to lodge a percentage of the value of larger items before an example is provided for demonstration. The Garnet Corporation is reasonably discerning in terms of its clientele and will not work with a mercenary unit whose Reputation DM is less than +1.

Broadside, Incorporated

Broadside, Inc. is a staple provider of weaponry used by many mercenary units and will deal with any properly accredited formation. It mostly sells infantry weapons up to TL9 but has a range of wheeled combat and artillery vehicles available. These are based on a family of four, six and eight-wheel light armoured cars with configurable armour packages and standardised weapon mounts.

Alvix Armaments

Alvix Armaments is best known as a small-arms manufacturer. It produces basic but reliable hardware at TL9 and also supplies high-quality TL9 specialist equipment including communications gear and battlefield sensors. Alvix has numerous corporate-security clients and acts as a broker for personnel when requested. The firm requires proper accreditation or corporate status for bulk sales but will sell batches of up to a couple of dozen weapons at retail prices to any legal buyer.

Benny's Bazaar

Benny's Bazaar is not an actual arms dealer but a popular term for any small-time weapons seller. Most will sell to almost anyone and rarely have anything more than small arms on sale. However, strange items sometimes turn up in a Benny Bazaar, including top-end grav tanks and even nuclear weapons. It is not usually wise to ask where they came from.

Interstellar Ordnance

Interstellar Ordnance is one of the larger arms manufacturing firms operating in the region. It produces an array of equipment at a variety of Tech Levels and sells mainly in bulk to government clients. Interstellar has contracts with some of the more prominent mercenary formations but tends not to sell in small quantities. Nevertheless, its equipment is an industry standard in many areas and may be purchased in bulk by other dealers for resale at inflated prices. Interstellar Ordnance does not offer mercenary training or recruiting.

Janissary Heavy Ordnance

Janissary Heavy Ordnance is a specialist firm producing artillery and aerospace defence weapons. It does not produce standard infantry equipment but can obtain it by subcontracting and Janissary produces some heavier infantry weapons such as shoulder-fired missiles and laser sniper rifles. The firm requires proper accreditation before it will do business.

Erquart Gravitics and Aerospace

Erquart produces grav vehicles and aerospace craft. It does not deal in infantry weapons or the like, and does not act as a broker for them, but does have a 'tank and crew' service whereby it will find personnel to operate the vehicles it provides. Erquart requires licensing and accreditation but in general its activities are limited to those who can afford its expensive equipment – which typically restricts clients to high-end mercenary units and governments.

Halrod, Fabian and Sons

Known as the 'gentleperson's outfitter for well-off mercenaries', HFS provides high-quality personal equipment to those who can afford its prices. The firm will only deal with units that have Reputation DM+1 or better and provides a personnel recruiting service to its loyal clients. Despite its oddball hunting-fishing-shooting image, HFS gear is in general excellent in terms of performance and practicality. According to persistent rumours, the firm has agents in many starports who buy up military equipment for resale on less strict terms and is in fact a front for a cynical 'anything you can pay for' service.

ARMS DEALERS

Dealer	Max. TL Available	Infantry	Artillery	Combat Vehicles	Aerospace	Support and Specialist
Garnet Corporation	14	Quality	Basic	Quality	Quality	Quality
Broadside, Incorporated	9	Basic	Basic	Basic	None	Basic
Alvix Armaments	9	Basic	None	None	None	Quality
Benny's Bazaar	8	Basic	None	None	None	None
Interstellar Ordnance	10	Quality	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic
Janissary Heavy Ordnance	12	Basic	Quality	None	Quality	Basic
Erquart Gravitics and Aerospace	13	None	None	Quality	Quality	Quality
Halrod, Fabian and Sons	10	Quality	None	None	None	Quality

CHAPTER - TEN

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

It is likely that the Travellers will find themselves working alongside another mercenary unit at some point or opposed to one. The Travellers might develop a relationship with another unit – good or bad – as a result of such interactions. They might also find themselves as part of a composite force made up of mercenary units or working with a specialist support formation. The following are examples of mercenary units, which might be encountered in the course of the tickets in this book or in a wider campaign.

ROCKETRY SERVICES, INC.

Rocketry Services is a platoon-sized artillery unit often found working in support of other mercenary formations. With all assets considered the unit is a reinforced platoon, with a reconnaissance and observation element and a bombardment element but its marketable capabilities are based only on the bombardment element. It is fully grav-mobile, although none of its vehicles can be considered a combat asset. The two air/rafts of the recon element are standard civilian models fitted with a pintle mount, whilst the weapons carriers are grav trucks retrofitted with sufficient armour to defeat most small arms but nothing heavier.

The unit is not known to be unreliable but has never achieved tremendous success in the marketplace. This might be due to the nature of its work – artillery might facilitate victories but it is those who occupy the objective that get the credit. Vehicles and equipment are well maintained and reliable, mainly using commercially available spares. The multiple-launch rocket system used by the unit is commonly available and passably accurate for its type. Several other units use the same design, which is essentially a military bombardment system mated to whatever transport is available.

Rocketry Services, Inc
(Captain Felycca Weston)

Bombardment Element (Capt. Weston)
- **1x Command Vehicle (ground truck)**
- **3x Bombardment Vehicle (ground truck with multiple-launch rocket system)**
- **Recon Element (Lt Hassin)**
- **2x Air/Raft**

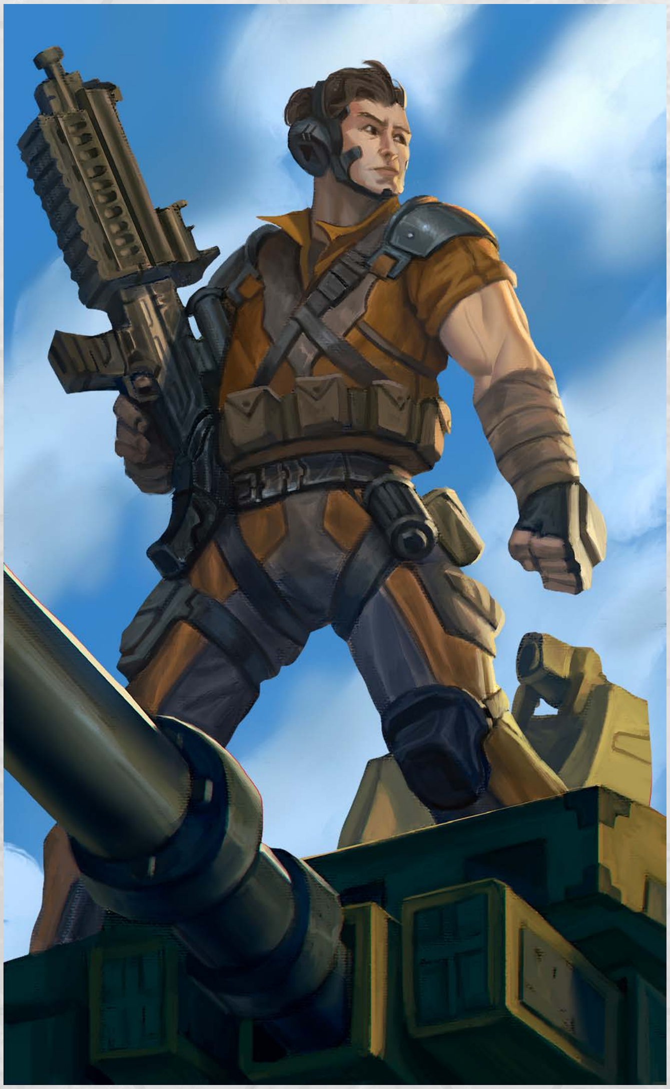
ROCKETRY
SERVICES INC

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Rocketry Services, Inc	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Platoon	—
Unit Type	Artillery	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	3	–1
Bombardment	8	–2
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	5	–1
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	9	+1

GRAVSTRIKE

GravStrike is a small formation specialising in high-tempo operations against targets in the enemy rear or supporting other formations making a strike. Its combat arm consists of a grav armour platoon, with four light grav tanks and a command vehicle. The latter is an APC converted to a command platform, with limited electronic warfare capabilities and excellent sensors. It mounts an aerospace-defence laser in a co-axial mount with a multipurpose anti-armour/anti-aerospace missile system.

The formation is supported by a small workshop contingent housed in three more grav APCs. These are not combat vehicles. One is a mobile workshop, one carries spares and one transports the mechanics and a couple of security personnel. Standard practice is for the workshop element to remain far outside the combat zone, with the combat arm fighting as a reinforced grav armour or armoured reconnaissance platoon.



The unit has a solid reputation for reliability and professionalism. It is in a solvent and well-supplied state and can afford to choose which contracts it takes. Captain Morrisse is known for her dislike of some rival units and can be reluctant to work with them. This manifests in higher fees rather than any unwillingness to provide support in the field but she and her people can be abrasive when they run into personnel from 'lesser' units when on R&R.

GravStrike (Cpt Elixa Morrisse Commanding)

Combat Platoon (Captain Morrisse)
- **1x Grav APC command vehicle**
- **4x Light Grav Tank**

Support Platoon (Lt Ivrian)
- **1x Workshop Grav APC**
- **1x Logistics Grav APC**
- **1x Transport Grav APC**

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	GravStrike	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	11	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	4	–1
Support	6	0
CEI or DEI	10	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	11	+1

THE ALRAANI RIFLES

The Alraani Rifles is an overgrown company-sized formation, which has become rather notorious for taking on almost any job and struggling to complete it. The force's troubles stem from over-recruiting, creating a force too big for its supply base. The unit's commander stubbornly refused to downsize, reasoning that a few successful contracts would provide enough income to fully equip and oversized unit, which would then be a potent fighting force and attractive in the marketplace. Instead, the Rifles have struggled endlessly to maintain their present status, more or less completing contracts and forfeiting bonuses. This force is unpopular to work with as its personnel are under-trained and prone to mistakes in the field but the Rifles are cheap relative to the number of boots they can put on the ground.

Organisation is along the lines of a standard infantry company, with overgrown platoons containing more personnel than their leaders can handle. Most people in leadership positions are over-promoted and inexperienced, further compounding this problem. Nevertheless, the unit's commander styles himself lieutenant-colonel; a rank more suited to someone leading a battalion-sized force.

The unit is equipped with low-end TL8 small arms for the most part. It is short of support weapons and vehicles, relying on the client to provide transportation much of the time. Those vehicles available are civilian models converted to military use and are not in good condition. Most of the unit's vehicles are concentrated in a provisional – and greatly oversized – platoon led by the unit's second in command. The vehicle crews act as mechanics and maintenance facilities are minimal.

The company has about twice as many platoons as normal and is unmanageable as a result. Likewise the platoons themselves are oversized. They are built around eight soldier rifle sections with small arms only, eight strong support sections that nominally contain a machinegun team and a squad equipped with shoulder-fired unguided anti-tank weapons and four soldier aerospace defence sections, which typically contain two low-quality shoulder-fired guided missile launchers. The only significant support weapons are two pairs of 100mm battlefield mortars comprising most of 6th Platoon.

The Alraani Rifles (Lt Col Tell Reibern)

Command Platoon (Lt Col Reibern)
- 1x Command Section
- 1x Rifle Section
- 1x Aerospace Defence Section
- 2x Off-road Vehicle
- 1x Off-road Truck

1st Platoon (Maj Arbenic)
- 5x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section
- 1x Aerospace Defence

2nd Platoon (Cpt Anvri)
- 4x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section

3rd Platoon (Cpt Orell)
- 4x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section

4th Platoon (Cpt Pavinne)
- 3x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section

5th Platoon (Cpt Gandry)
- 2x Rifle Section
- 3x Support Section

6th Platoon (Cpt Denn)
- 1x Rifle Section
- 2x Mortar Section

Transport Platoon (Maj Exeter)
- 5x Light Off-road Vehicle
- 8x Off-road Truck
- 1x Aerospace Defence Section

In the field, standard practice is to break up 5th and 6th Platoons to create support groups, fielding 2nd, 3rd and 4th Platoons as the main fighting force with 1st Platoon in reserve. Although unwieldy, with twice as many personnel as a typical infantry platoon, the Alraani Rifles is capable of defeating a mid-tech infantry force on equal terms. Its main problem is that equal terms are hard to come by. More commonly, mercenary forces are outnumbered and must outclass their opponents. The Alraani Rifles would be hard pushed to find such an opponent.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	The Alraani Rifles	—
Unit Size	Oversized Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Partial Motorised	0
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	1	–2
Aerospace	2	–2
Support	2	–2
CEI or DEI	3	–2
Morale	6	0
Reputation	5	–1

RAVELL'S DEFENDERS

Ravell's Defenders is a specialist aerospace defence unit, which operates either independently or as the aerospace component of a heavy security force. The unit is self-contained with its own maintenance and support contingent, and can offer a secondary electronic warfare capability to its clients.

Organisation is along standard company lines, with a headquarters platoon and defence platoons. Each of the latter contains four vehicles. Two are equipped with medium-range aerospace defence missiles and a point-defence gatling laser turret; two with short-range missiles and a fast-slewing laser. Typically vehicles operate in pairs; one of each type. All vehicles use the same lightly armoured six-wheel chassis.

The command second uses an eight-wheel version of the same vehicle. It contains one command vehicle with very good electronic warfare and communications equipment, a maintenance vehicle, an APC version carrying the security contingent and mounting a short-range aerospace defence fit and long-range missile launcher mounted on the same chassis. This vehicle can deliver boosted missiles capable of intercepting starships in low orbit but more commonly carries a multi-submunition missile that can deal with several incoming missiles or craft at once. It is very slow to reload but offers a surge capability when necessary and allows the unit to tackle very high-flying targets or spacecraft.

Ravell's Defenders (Major Charles Ravell)

Command Platoon (Maj Ravell)
- **1x Grav APC command vehicle**
- **4x Light Grav Tank**

Support Platoon (Lt Ivrian)
- **1x Workshop Grav APC**
- **1x Logistics Grav APC**
- **1x Transport Grav APC**

RAVELL'S DEFENDERS

The unit does not deploy as a field combat asset but may accompany ground forces in proximity to the enemy. Its capability to intercept battlefield missiles and even some artillery projectiles acts as a force-multiplier, as does its communications assets. Occasionally the aerospace defence vehicles may get close to the enemy and engage ground targets with their lasers. On a mid-tech battlefield this is highly effective but the unit's commanders strongly resist requests to 'move up and offer fire support' from the client as this is beyond the force's remit.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Ravell's Defenders	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Aerospace Defence	—
Unit TL	11	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	3	–2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	9	+1
Support	8	0
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	9	0
Reputation	8	–1

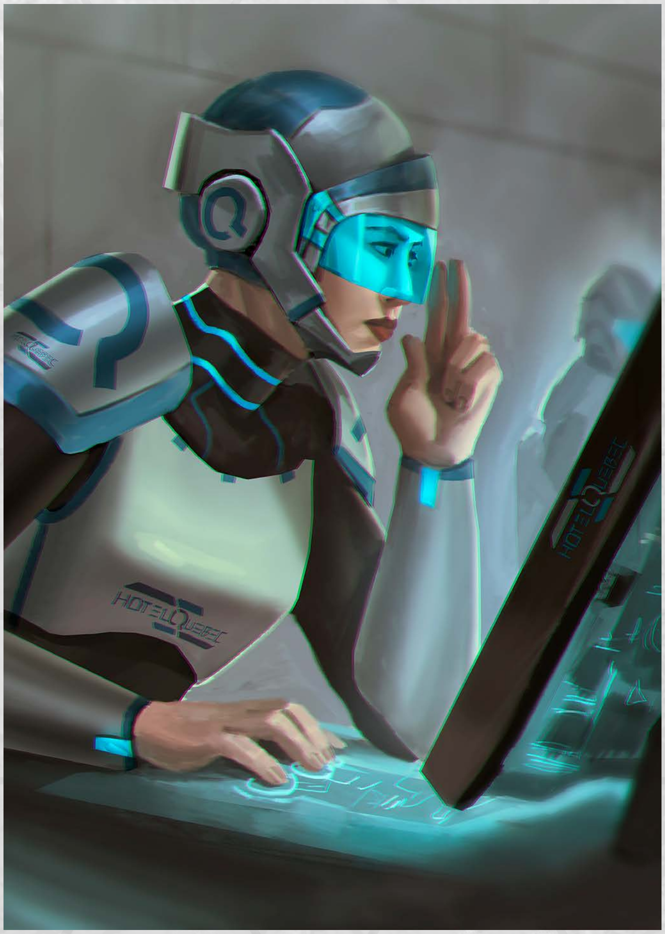
HOTEL QUEBEC

Hotel Quebec takes its name from its function. It is a headquarters-for hire, providing communications, electronic warfare, intelligence analysis and command-and-control functions to the end client. The majority of the unit is carried in off-road trucks, with a few air/rafts for liaison and security work. This is not sufficient for the force to be considered partially grav-mobile.

The force is organised as a provisional company and set up to slot into large formations or even function as an army command centre on a mid-tech world. It has security and aerospace defence elements but cannot be considered a fighting force.

Unusually for such a small force, Hotel Quebec is commanded by a full colonel. Normally this would be pretentious but Colonel Meikala Turgenyev actually held that rank during her service in the homeworld's military. Her specialism was intelligence and war planning, and it remains so. Day-to-day operations are run by her executive officer and subordinates. Hotel Quebec has a high proportion of officers and technical specialists, along with liaison personnel and non-military experts such as negotiators, lawyers and accountants. These normally remain outside a combat zone, advising the client and the unit remotely.

Vehicles are paramilitary in nature for the most part, typically of a sort widely available on the security market. All are armoured against small arms fire and mount light support weapons for self-defence. Other than a single light armoured car only the aerospace defence vehicles carry heavier weapons and those are specialised to their role.



Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Hotel Quebec	—
Unit Size	Small Company	—
Unit Type	Specialist	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	4	–1
Support	12	+2
CEI or DEI	10	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	10	+1

Hotel Quebec has an excellent reputation as a force-multiplier and is sometimes hired to oversee military exercises. Although this is expensive it generally yields good results. When a large mercenary force is being put together for a major operation, this unit is usually at the top of the list for potential command elements, although sometimes Hotel Quebec plays host to a specialist commander, providing communications and intelligence services without being a link in the chain of command.

WARDELL'S VICTORS

Wardell's Victors is a rarity in the mercenary marketplace; a battalion-sized unit. It is capable of detaching one or more of its companies for an assignment but does not generally do so. More commonly the force fights as a single integrated formation. The core fighting power of the force is lift infantry, with organic fire support and transport, achieved by using relatively inexpensive grav vehicles, which are still vastly more capable than anything a TL7-8 opponent might field.

The Victors typically operate in the upper-mid-tech segment of the marketplace, where their firepower is sufficient to tip the balance of a planetary conflict. When the unit has to take on higher-tech forces its light equipment can be a liability but good tactics and years of experience render the force surprisingly effective even when outgunned.

The grav tanks used by the Victors are, with one exception, only just worthy of the name. They are super-light reconnaissance vehicles that can wipe the floor with TL7 armour but cannot stand up to TL9+ anti-armour weapons. The single medium tank is quite old but is a source of much pride within the unit. It was captured long ago, fixed up and put into service, and has saved the bacon of both armoured and infantry elements more than once. The other fire support vehicles are a mix of lightly armoured fast-response platforms and tank destroyers with much heavier armour but limited mobility.

Wardell's Victors (Lt Col Jean Wardell)

Command/Support Company
- Command Platoon
  - 1x Grav Command Vehicle
  - 1x Nuclear Damper Vehicle
  - 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
  - 1x APC (security contingent)
  - 3x Air/Raft (liaison and security)

Field Workshop Platoon
- 1x Grav-mobile field workshop
- 1x Grav Armoured Recovery Vehicle
- 3x Grav Truck

Artillery Platoon
- 3x Grav Sled (Rocket Artillery)
- 2x Grav Sled (Tube Artillery)
- Logistics Platoon
- 1x Grav APC
- 5x Grav Truck

1st Company (Lift Infantry)
- Command Platoon
  - 1x Grav Command Vehicle
  - 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
  - 2x Grav Sled (Fire Support)
- 3x Lift Infantry Platoon
  - 3x Grav APC
  - 1x Grav Sled (Fire Support)

2nd Company (Lift Infantry)
- Command Platoon
  - 1x Grav Command Vehicle
  - 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
  - 1x Grav APC
- 3x Lift Infantry Platoon
  - 3x Grav APC
  - 1x Grav Sled (Fire Support)

3rd Company (Grav Cavalry)
- Command Platoon
  - 1x Grav Command Vehicle
  - 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
  - 1x Light Grav Tank
  - 1x Medium Grav Tank
- 2 x Grav Cavalry Platoon
  - 3x Grav APC
  - 1x Light Grav Tank
- 1x Armoured Recon Platoon
  - 3x Light Grav Tank
  - 1x Grav APC

Tactically, the Victors normally operate in a classic 'two wings and a reserve' formation, with the two lift infantry companies as the main fighting force. The grav cavalry company will send forward a reconnaissance element or conduct rapid strikes in support of the wings, and stands ready to flank, exploit or cover a retreat. The command element has very limited fighting power but can deliver rocket and shell bombardment in support of the other companies. Its capability to recover and repair grav vehicles is limited but sufficient to keep the force in action even where there is no local technical support available.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Wardell's Victors	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Lift Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	5	–1
Aerospace	6	0
Support	8	0
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	13	+3
Reputation	11	+2

ギロチン
HK INDUSTRIES
NIGHTWALKERS
POLIZEI

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY ADVENTURE 0: TRIAL BY FIRE

SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY ADVENTURE 0: TRIAL BY FIRE

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INTRODUCTION

Trial by Fire is different to the typical *Traveller* adventure, as it concerns the activities of a mercenary unit rather than a band of adventurers. The events that form the backdrop to this adventure could provide opportunities for intrepid Travellers but this will mean operating in a war zone. It might be interesting to run standard adventures alongside this one, with the Travellers encountering the mercenaries or perhaps even being the cause of some of their troubles. However, *Trial by Fire* focuses on the military aspects of the situation and is appropriate for a small mercenary unit with considerably more firepower than the average Traveller band.

In *Trial by Fire*, the Travellers will raise and field a small mercenary formation to participate in the conflict on New Moscow. In addition to completing their missions and defeating enemies, the Travellers will need to navigate the treacherous waters of local politics to ensure their force is kept supplied and supported. A mis-step in the corridors of power can be as deadly as any foe on the battlefield and it may be that the New Moscow conflict is won in the field but lost at the negotiating table.

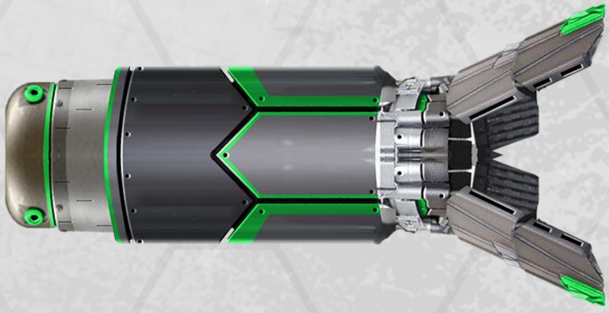
INVOLVING THE TRAVELLERS

The adventure begins when the Travellers accept a contract from the government of New Moscow. Their remit is to help regain control of a complex situation in which multiple factions are fighting for dominance over the world's agricultural exports. Their motivations might vary; all that matters is that they are on New Moscow, armed and ready for action.

The Travellers might get involved in the New Moscow situation for purely financial reasons – they want to form a mercenary unit and a suitable source of employment is available. They might also have a personal stake in the conflict. Perhaps one of their number has relatives or friends on New Moscow. If so, the Traveller might have sold their friends on the idea of assisting in the conflict. Afterward, the mercenary unit might move on to new employment, with or without the Traveller, or might be sold to a new commander. This happens sometimes and is more common than being amalgamated within a larger force. The sort of people who raise and lead a military unit tend not to like subordinating themselves but if they can agree the sale with their personnel they may be able to sell the unit as a going concern and effectively retire from the mercenary marketplace. There are even a few commanders who have raised, established, then sold a series of effective units, although this is rare.

The Travellers' involvement might not be entirely freelance. There are several interested parties who cannot intervene directly for various reasons and any of them might be willing to act through a supposedly independent mercenary force. This permits them to maintain distance from the conflict and act impartially, despite them having put up the money to raise the force and to hire it – through different agents, of course. This is a common gambit where politics or treaties make direct action impossible or where an Imperial noble expects to be made the arbiter of any negotiations. Provable involvement will make the noble ineligible for such a role but carefully managed catspaws can create a situation where the negotiations are already biased in favour of the noble's desired outcome when they begin… and they control the process as well.

The Referee can make the Travellers agents of one of the involved parties – knowingly or otherwise – if this seems desirable. It does limit some of the choices the Travellers will make but also allows the Referee to nudge the Travellers in the right direction if they lose focus or cannot decide how to proceed.



Administering Trial by Fire

Trial By Fire guides the Travellers through the process of raising, equipping and fielding their mercenary force and might be considered a tutorial for a mercenary campaign. The stages are all important, so even if the Travellers are desperate to get out and start fighting they should progress through these actions first. The formation process will allow the Travellers to organise their force the way they want it and will also serve to familiarise the less military-minded of them with the concepts and terms in use.

Once the unit is formed, it will begin serving in the field. Whilst it can be convenient to pace developments of the campaign alongside the actions of the Travellers, the factions and the conflict will not stand still whilst the Travellers faff about. If they insist on halting operations for two months because they want additional training or are waiting for their mail-order grav tank… or they have decided to do side missions to make money for more weapons… then events will move forward without them. Time does not stand still just because the Travellers want to do so.

CHAPTER-ONE

THE WORLD OF NEW MOSCOW

New Moscow (B76779A-7) lies at the very edge of Imperial space, in the Tobia subsector of the Trojan Reaches. The subsector capital, seat of the Duke of Tobia, lies just four parsecs away but New Moscow is separated from it by more than distance. The majority of the subsector is dominated by the Tobia Cluster, which has jump-1 links sprawling away into the Usher subsector. Jump-1 trade is confined to the cluster, whilst those vessels with higher capabilities have few reasons to visit New Moscow. There are much better opportunities in other directions.

To rimward-trailing of New Moscow is the Great Rift, a significant barrier to navigation. The neighbouring world of Batav is administered directly from Tobia and, whilst not officially restricted, is subject to enhanced travel regulations as a result of an Ancients site being found there. New Moscow itself was colonised in what is sometimes referred to as the ‘rush to the edge’, in which several worlds were rapidly settled along the fringe of the Great Rift. There seems to have been no overall reason for this pattern of colonisation, other than perhaps the attraction of natural frontiers.

Once settled, New Moscow expanded steadily into a breadbasket world, supplying the Tobia Cluster with bulk and quality foodstuffs. A port capable of handling bulk grain ships was necessary and funded using loans from the banks of Tobia. The investment was a good one and for many years New Moscow enjoyed stable prosperity. It was never a rich world in the sense of huge industrial output and large-scale commercial activity but was a decent place to live and work.

Other than the starport/capital, New Moscow’s cities never expanded beyond the local hub level. Each was the centre of a hinterland characterised by farming towns and luxury-foods plantations. Most businesses were independently owned and operated in a spirit of generally healthy competition. Industrial farms existed but the majority of produce came from modest-sized holdings. Society was based on a gentleman-farmer model, with towns and cities operating supporting businesses. Government was minimal, with most regions providing their own emergency and security services to a standardised model.

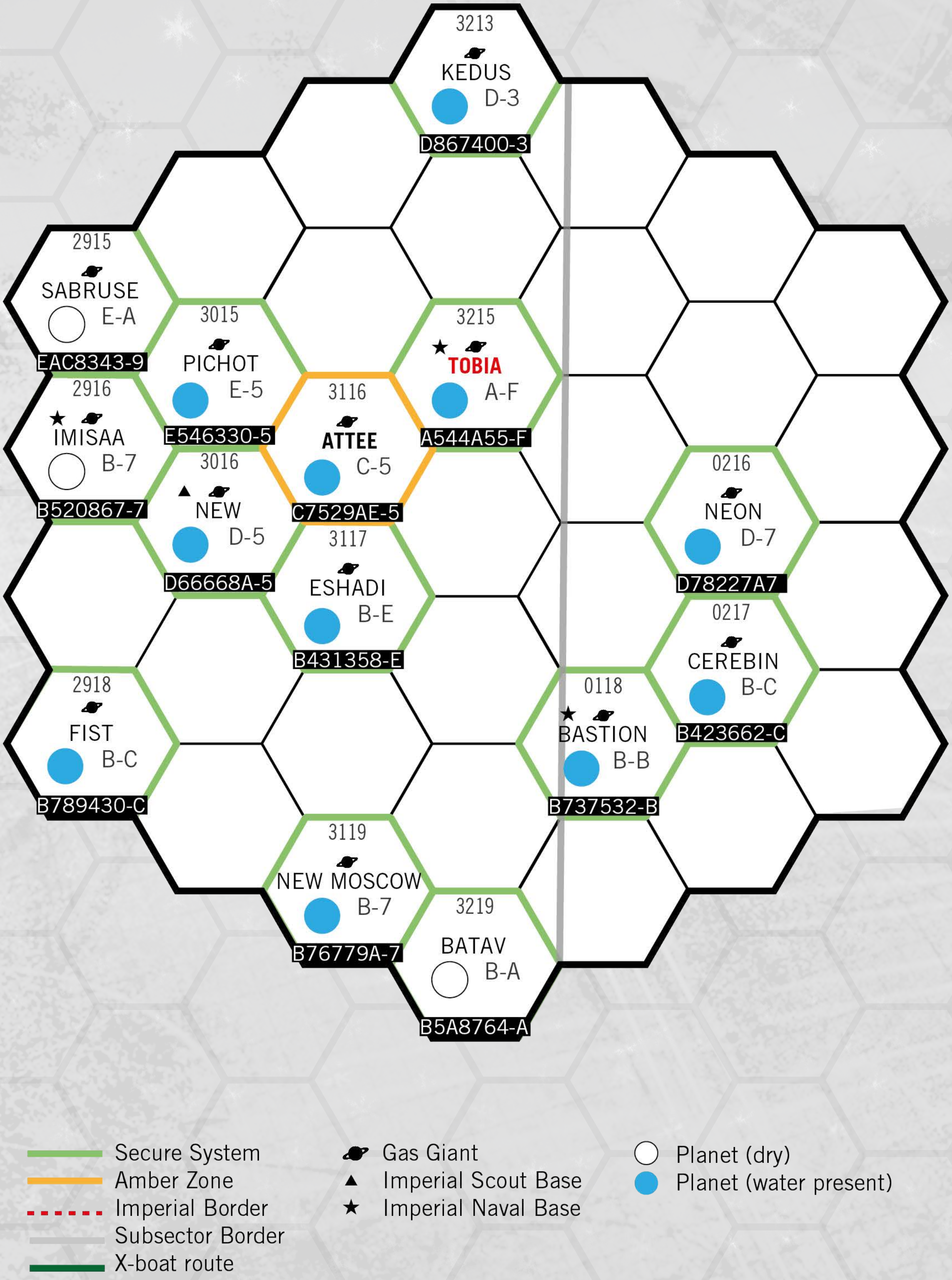
New Moscow’s technological base never really developed. With a decentralised population and few large cities there was never the critical mass of industrial activity to push technological advancement and little need. The world’s TL7 industrial base produced most of what was needed, with higher-tech items imported as standalone equipment or black-boxed to interoperate with locally produced gear.

The situation remained stable for many years, during which imports of higher-tech items gradually increased. These were mainly luxury goods or quality-of-life purchases and were not restricted to the elite. A significant proportion of the population began spending more than they should on consumer goods, often trying to outdo one another with status symbols or this season’s must-haves. Lavish spending became overspending, straining the economy. This might not have had too much impact but for events elsewhere.

Turbulence in the markets of the Tobia Cluster and trends for certain foods not produced on New Moscow resulted in a sudden downturn in profits. Unconcerned at first, the people of New Moscow continued to spend and to borrow. By the time the markets recovered, the local situation was dangerously unstable and society began to undergo irreversible changes. Wealth, once distributed relatively evenly, began to concentrate. Those with the reserves to buy out their competitors began to build agricultural empires and it was not uncommon for rivals to be undermined by financial shenanigans until they were in a position to be acquired.

TOBIA SUBSECTOR

USHER SUBSECTOR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BASTION
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B737532-B
3119
NEW MOSCOW
B-7
B76779A-7
3219
BATAV
B-A
B5A8764-A
Secure System
Amber Zone
Imperial Border
Subsector Border
X-boat route
Gas Giant
▲ Imperial Scout Base
★ Imperial Naval Base
○ Planet (dry)
● Planet (water present)

The process continued until what had been a world of highly productive individual businesses became characterised by corporate-style agrobusiness groups, all of which were engaged in a struggle for supremacy and market dominance. Efficiency actually increased, in terms of overall productivity but this was offset by the costs of keeping rivals at bay and bribing the ineffectual central government.

Trade wars were perhaps inevitable and given the lack of significance of New Moscow the first conflicts to break out were deemed ‘internal matters’ by the Imperial authorities. Even disruption to the world’s economy elicited little interest – the Tobia Cluster was not short of food and little else of use came out of New Moscow. Conflict has since intensified, with Imperial reactions limited to diplomatic pressure and the establishment of a ‘no-fight zone’ around the starport.

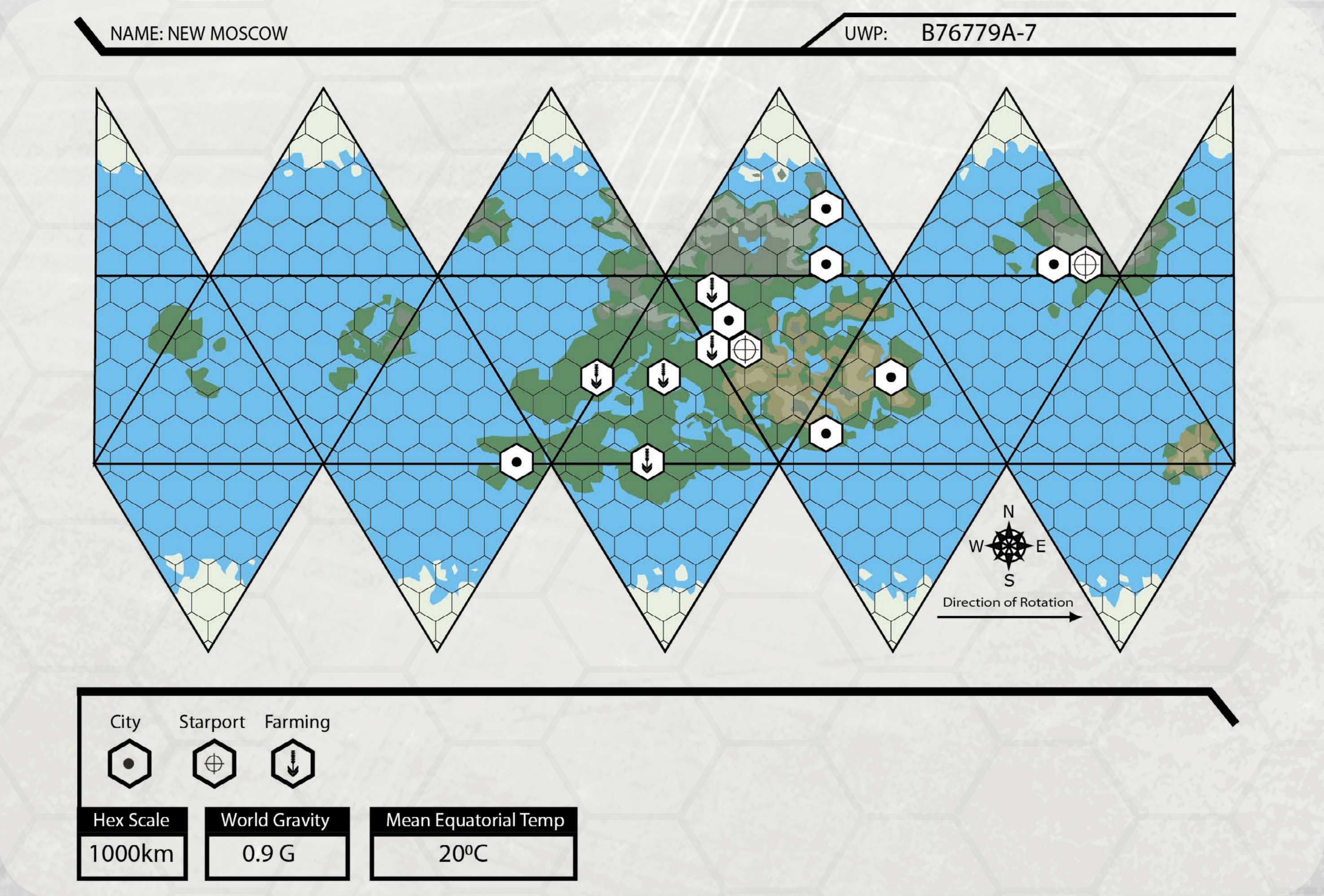
WORLD DATA

New Moscow is a quintessential garden world – 70% water coverage, average gravity, a good atmosphere and acceptable surface temperatures. Had it been located somewhere else it might have seen heavy colonisation but lying on the fringe of the Great Rift it was on the road to nowhere. As a result its population reached and became stable at just over 50 million. Regions and cities enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy, with the central government mainly overseeing trade with the wider universe.

Today, the situation is quite different. Some regions have coalesced into factions; others are a battleground in ideological and sometimes literal terms as the factions try to win over settlements and cities. The central government has issued a series of ever-tighter laws but cannot enforce them outside a small region around the capital. Even there, it is propped up by an Imperial peacekeeping force without which the capital and starport would become fair game for the factions.

New Moscow City

The capital, New Moscow City, is located more or less in the centre of the world’s main continent. It is surrounded by a nominally 200 kilometre ‘no fight zone’. In practice this distance varies as it is based on landmarks and terrain features rather than map lines. One such landmark is the bridge at Tobol Crossing.



Anyone setting foot – wheel or relative airspace location marker – on the bridge is in 'no fight' territory and attacks on the bridge are treated as attacks on the peacekeeping force. This will have detrimental results for the guilty party and has been avoided thus far. The approaches to the bridge have seen running battles, which the peacekeeping force has been ordered not to become involved in, to prevent a convoy from reaching the capital. This situation is typical of New Moscow today, with politics and legal brinkmanship mixed in with the fighting.

The city itself is surrounded by farmland, like most cities on New Moscow. It is built to mature TL7 levels but with many features of higher-tech cities. Buildings are usually large and tall, widely spaced, with open areas in between. Landing platforms for grav vehicles are in evidence almost everywhere. Larger structures are connected by light railways and served by internal electric vehicle networks. Although the technology in use is limited, the concepts are very much those of an advanced starfaring society.

The city and its hinterland are subject to strict laws, many of them new and sometimes rather confusing. Enforcement is by an expanded police force, which is still coming to terms with its changed role. One consequence of this is a great many arrests for actions that turn out not to be illegal and this is creating resentment among the populace. The Imperial peacekeeping force is based at the city, sending out patrols to observe conditions elsewhere on the planet but mostly restricting itself to securing the no-fight zone.

This peacekeeping force was originally intended to be much larger but diplomatic efforts to create a peace for it to keep came to nothing. Currently the force consists of a composite lift-infantry battlegroup in reinforced brigade-size, plus an aerospace defence contingent and a detachment of Imperial Marines. The latter are not peacekeepers; they are responsible for protecting the starport – which is Imperial territory – and will not operate outside it.

The peacekeeping force is sometimes augmented by mercenary units, who typically provide capabilities the Imperial forces lack. It is formed from regular army units and whilst its personnel do their best they are not trained for intelligence work or small-scale raids to capture those who attack off-limits targets. Besides, the Imperial authorities are trying to avoid conflict between their forces and those of local factions since officially the conflict is still an 'internal matter'. Mercenaries are preferable for small-scale operations whilst the brigade remains concentrated and highly visible as a deterrent. Cynics point out that this means all the casualties fall on mercenary forces whilst the so-called peacekeepers have an easy ride.

The capital is used as a base and safe-zone for rest and refitting by mercenary forces deployed elsewhere on the planet. This sometimes leads to personnel from units that have been fighting one another finding themselves in the same bar. Results can vary, from shared reminiscence of events from both perspectives to a down-and-dirty bar fight. For the most part, mercenaries stay in the parts of town that cater best to them, creating a small financial boom there and troubling the rest of the population little.

The Eastern Plains

The Eastern Plains are one of the drier parts of the main continent, with some areas being little more than semi-desert. The region is characterised by widely spaced small cities, mostly on watercourses or atop large natural aquifers. There is a more densely populated region along the coast, with several cities specialising in aquaculture. These have, for the most part, remained separate from the conflict elsewhere and are quietly emerging as the main economic force on continent. This is not least due to lower military expenses and little destruction of resources. In the long term these coastal cities will either emerge as the winners in the conflict – due to not taking part – or they will have to face the winning faction as it consolidates.

The Amur-Vilyuy Basin

Lying to the west of the capital, the Amur-Vilyuy Basin is a well-watered region home to the world's most productive farmland. It was in this rich river system that the conflict started and it remains the most disputed area. Conflict is sporadic here, just as everywhere, but there is more at stake for the winners and losers, and destruction has a greater effect on the world's economy.

The Northern Mainland

The Northern Mainland is characterised by steep mountains in the east, running in an unbroken chain almost to the tip of the continent. The cities on the eastern side of these mountains are small and concerned mostly with aquaculture, whilst the wide plains on the western side are good cattle country. A variety of animals are raised, some of them native to New Moscow. Herds range from bulk meat and leather to high-value luxury food and goods. The Northern Mainland is gradually coming under the sway of the Real Future faction but is by no means unified nor likely to become so in the next few years.

CHAPTER-TWO

THE NEW MOSCOW CONFLICT

The New Moscow conflict is a multi-way not-quite civil war. No formal state of war exists, although the government has declared an emergency and requested assistance from the Imperium. The state of emergency has allowed a raft of new and tighter laws to be pushed through but has not done much to control the conflict.

The overall situation is one of what might be termed 'lukewarm war'. A state of armed tension exists across most of the planet but actual fighting is uncommon. When there is an outbreak of violence it tends to be either low-intensity or of very short duration. Desultory skirmishing is the norm in some areas, whilst in others there is a pretence of business as usual until a strike or other military operation suddenly materialises. In both cases the fighting is in support of a political-economic agenda, with all factions having the same ultimate goal.

The decentralised agricultural businesses of New Moscow are coalescing – whether they like it or not – into large business groups, which are willing to absorb their competitors by force if necessary. Since such activities are illegal, pretexts and justifications must be in place before any military operation intended to take territory or assets change hands. Afterward, legal wrangling and outright bribery of the government's investigators will be necessary to ensure gains are kept.

In addition to the main factions, each region has small local defence associations or insurgent movements fighting against them. Most of these are alliances of necessity, formed by people who would prefer to be independent but need some form of collective defence against the more organised forces of the large factions. These defensive or insurgent forces are mostly armed with civilian weapons such as hunting rifles and shotguns, and have little or no military equipment or vehicles.

THE FACTIONS

The most powerful faction on New Moscow is still the government, which officially controls the whole planet and does not recognise any of the other factions as a political entity. This works to the benefit of the government as well as the factions, since the government would have to respond to armed force used by a recognised political entity. Failure to do so is an acknowledgement that the government cannot control its own territory and is likely to have serious consequences. The pretence that nothing out of the ordinary is occurring allows the factions to do as they please but keeps the government out of a civil war it cannot win.

Despite officially being in charge, the government cannot control any territory outside the no-fight zone, other than around a few bases. Its small and underfunded forces have withdrawn from most other regions but continue to mount patrols there from time-to-time. These are conducted with great solemnity and a certain amount of pomp but they are for show only. The factions typically refrain from engaging government forces and the government does not try too hard to locate them.

When conflict in a region gets out of hand, the government makes a big show of sending its troops to restore order – and they are backed up by a rather more assertive Imperial peacekeeping force. Government officials will typically stall for as long as possible to avoid having to intervene and the factions have learned to play along with this face-saving exercise. Thus intervention in a troubled region is something of a 'clock' for operations there. If a faction can make gains cleanly then calm the situation down sufficiently there will be no governmental intervention. If not, operations may have to be aborted. The day may come when a faction is confident of being able to defeat the government and take control but with Imperial forces propping up the planetary army this is a no-win situation for the present.

Governmental forces are typical of this kind of world. Mostly equipped with locally produced equipment they are organised as battalions that are sometimes grouped into temporary brigades. Wheeled vehicles are almost exclusively used for ground transport, with a handful of old grav gunships deployed as air support. New Moscow does not have an air force as such.

Battalions use a standardised three-and-one model, with three rifle companies and a support company. The latter contains a light self-propelled artillery platoon, an aerospace defence platoon, an armoured reconnaissance platoon and the battalion headquarters platoon. Rifle companies have four platoons; three are composed of infantry riding in six-wheeled APCs and one is a headquarters platoon, which has a command vehicle, aerospace defence vehicle and two APCs carrying infantry.

Infantry personnel are equipped with TL7 small arms and light support weapons and are supported by 25mm autocannon on their vehicles. Armoured reconnaissance vehicles carry a 75mm cannon as their main armament. Equipment is of reasonable quality but is old, with some items in short supply and morale is low. Nevertheless, a governmental infantry battalion is quite capable of crushing most opposition the factions might mount.

The government also controls a number of static emplacements and bases, some of which mount heavy artillery weapons capable of dominating the surrounding countryside. The loss of such an installation would be a severe blow to the government's credibility but would also trigger a large-scale response that would certainly pull in Imperial troops to assist.

Government Motor Rifle Battalion

The most likely government force the Travellers will encounter is a motor rifle battalion, or a company detached from one. Combat equipment is considered to be Basic, with most other items provided at a Sparse or Minimal level.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Governmental Motor Rifle Battalion	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Motorised Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	1	–2
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	2	–2
CEI or DEI	6	–1
Morale	5	–1
Reputation	6	0

Imperial Peacekeeping Force

Although the Imperial peacekeeping force is organised as a full brigade with supports, it is unlikely ever to operate as a single unit. More commonly, smaller battlegroups are detached. These might be in reinforced battalion strength but most operations require only a company. Some additional forces might be attached if necessary, but on New Moscow the aerospace threat is minimal and armoured vehicles are vulnerable to infantry support weapons. A grav-mobile lift infantry company is more than enough to deal with most situations.

A lift infantry company consists of three platoons of infantry equipped with combat armour and TL12 small arms, riding in grav APCs. These are fitted with either a direct-fire plasma gun for support or a laser anti-missile/aerospace defence mount. The fourth platoon in each company has a headquarters vehicle, a grav APC carrying an infantry section, an aerospace defence vehicle and a light grav tank. Given the technological disparity between the peacekeeping force and the factions' combat assets, a rapid high-firepower assault could eliminate most threats before the APCs even touch down. Infantry need to dismount only to mop up

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Imperial Army Peacekeeping Force	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Lift Infantry	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	10	+1
Bombardment	0	0
Aerospace	3	–1
Support	7	0
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	10	+2
Reputation	10	+2

Real Future

Real Future is the largest of the on-planet factions. It is active in all areas but strongest on the Northern Mainland. The faction's mission statement proclaims that it will 'give the people of New Moscow a real future' by unifying the 'inefficient and reactionary economic sector to create an agrobusiness powerhouse'. Real Future loudly proclaims its loyalty to the central government and provides considerable funding above and beyond its normal taxation. It is quite possible this funding is all that is propping up the near-bankrupt central administration and it may be curtailed at some point to cause a collapse. In the meantime Real Future exerts considerable interest over the government and can usually get its actions rubber-stamped without difficulty. This position has the effect of forcing Real Future to move slowly and cautiously, swallowing up rivals one by one in a string of 'mergers' and 'debt-resolution' annexations.

Real Future has the nearest thing to an organised military on New Moscow and makes use of mercenary forces mainly as a cadre to train its own personnel. It typically fields company-sized 'security groups' equipped with similar weaponry to the governmental forces. Indeed, Real Future has somehow acquired some equipment identical to that used by the planetary army and in similarly distressed condition. A security group typically consists of around 120 personnel with TL7 small arms, supported by one or two wheeled APCs or armoured cars identical to those used by the planetary armed forces. Additional transportation is provided by civilian trucks, most of which are rugged designs well suited to operations in the outback. Real Future's paramilitary security units are likely to be more effective than the planetary army; they are better led and more motivated to win.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Real Future Mobile Security Group	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Motorised Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	2	-2
CEI or DEI	6	–1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	7	0

Alliance of the Western Rivers

The AWR is concentrated mainly in the Amur-Vilyuy Basin. It is in many ways the polar opposite to Real Future. Where RF proclaims its actions as being made on behalf of the central government, AWR loudly condemns the government's lack of decisive action as a reason for its own 'necessary self-defence measures'. AWR is also much more loosely organised than Real Future and has a history of rather bitter internal disputes. This has curtailed its growth and may ultimately lead to a breakup. For now, the alliance has a real chance of gaining full control of the western basin.

AWR uses small mercenary formations for most of its offensive operations. These are portrayed as retaliation for attacks by other factions, which the central government should have prevented or as elimination of threats created by others. Local security is provided by a 'citizens militia' equipped for the most part with imported small arms but lacking in essential support equipment such as communications gear and battlefield sensors. Large-scale operations are chaotic in nature due to internal rivalries but AWR forces are competent enough at the platoon level.

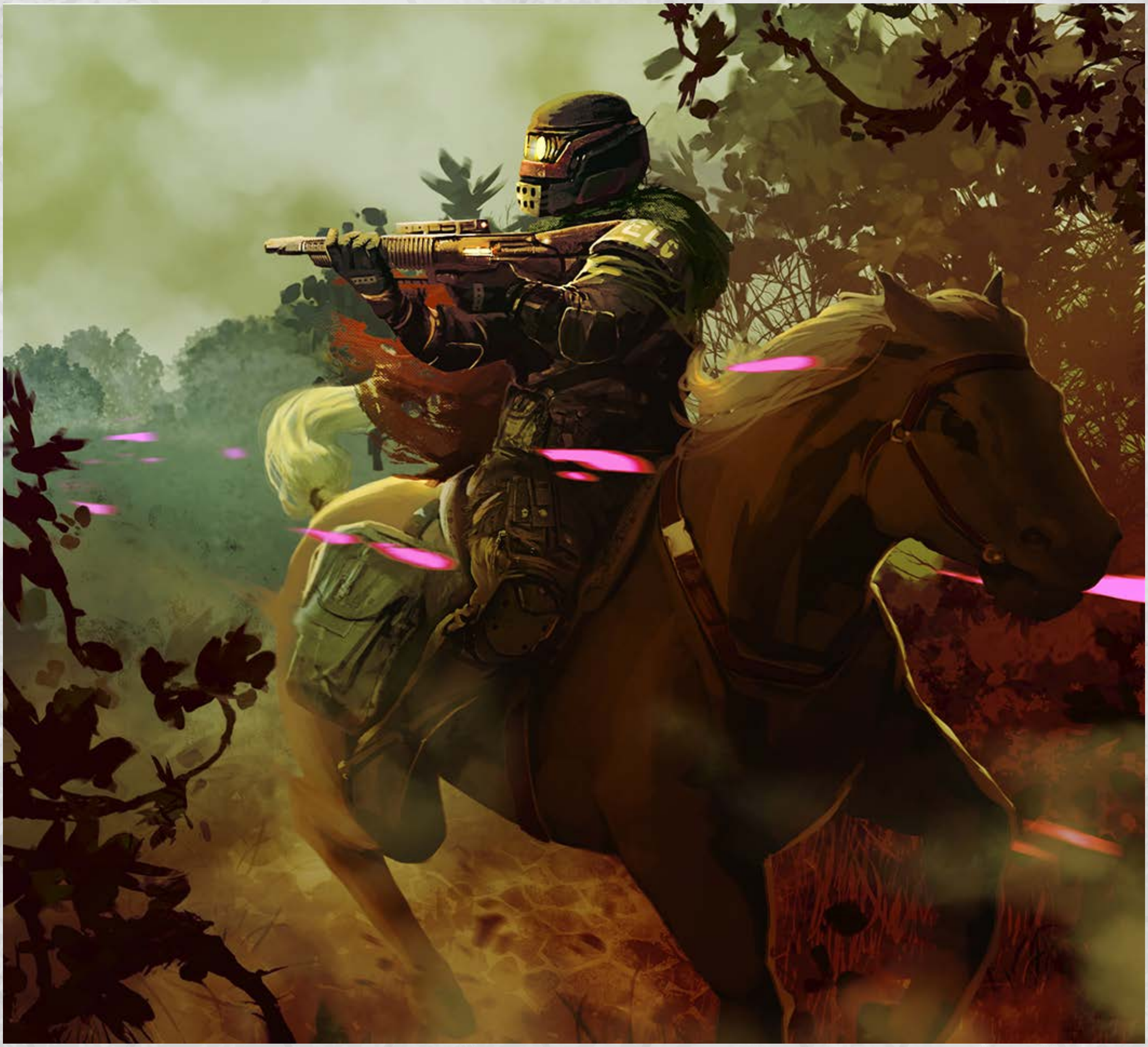
Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	AWR Local Defence Militia	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	0
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	4	–1

Eastern Loyalist Collective

The ELC is mostly concentrated, if that is the right word, on the Eastern Plains but has small enclaves elsewhere. It is loosely organised around influential and charismatic figures and has managed to create an effective semi-military force. This is based around the Eastern Plains Security Initiative, an illegal but tacitly accepted paramilitary raised to reduce lawlessness in regions the planetary army tended to neglect. The initiative raised and trained its forces in defiance of the law but they were effective in doing what the government could not and had been an institution for decades before the present conflict.

The EPSI is equipped with locally available small arms, favouring powerful marksman rifles over light automatics. Its grey-uniformed personnel are a mix of professional marshals and volunteers who serve when the need arises. Originally formed to deal with thieves and bandits, the force uses a mix of civilian off-road vehicles and horses for mobility. Organisation is very loose, with combat forces pulled together from whomever is available. A few support weapons are in use, mostly machineguns and mortars fitted to pickup trucks. Personnel are individually skilful and motivated by loyalty to friends, neighbours and fellow members.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	ELC Mounted Infantry Band	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Cavalry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Mounted	+2
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	8	0



CHAPTER-THREE

THE NEW MOSCOW TICKET

At the beginning of the adventure the Travellers will know little about the situation they are getting involved in beyond what they are presented with in the ticket. Whilst this information is generally true it is partial and biased. This is a common situation for mercenaries and successful commanders have a habit of doing some research before they deploy a force.

Security, Section to Company. Standard Rate plus bonus. Ongoing.

The world of New Moscow is an agricultural garden world on the edge of Imperial space. Recent economic troubles have severely disrupted some regions, resulting in insurgent activity. The planetary government seeks mercenary forces to assist in pacifying the troubled regions.

The planetary government of New Moscow requires one or more mercenary forces, of section to company strength, for ongoing security operations. Unit must be capable of relocation over significant distances but full tactical mobility is not required. Standard rates are payable, calculated as double the salary budget for a typical unit per month plus significant support and basing. A bonus equivalent to two payments is offered for satisfactory completion of the mission.

Opposition is expected to be light. Insurgent groups are armed with TL7 small arms and have few vehicles or artillery. Aerospace threat is negligible.

REFEREE'S NOTES

The ticket's particulars are more or less accurate, although the 'insurgent' activity is more complex than represented. The Travellers will be based out of the starport, at least at first, and can expect full resupply with TL7 items. If they require more advanced equipment such as ammunition for higher-tech small arms they will have to source this through their usual channels.

The mercenaries will be expected to make sure they do not make the government look bad and must behave with restraint wherever possible. When they do fight the government expects victory, of course, and although support is theoretically available from the peacekeeping force and planetary army, calling upon it will create problems for the Travellers.

What the planetary government has not mentioned is that it is in a terrible economic state. Its exports are greatly reduced by the factional politics and disruption of logistics caused by the conflict. The army is demoralised and inefficient, and most of the planet is beyond governmental control. Highlighting this situation will displease any officials the Travellers have to deal with, so diplomacy is necessary when dealing with the issues.

This unfortunate situation will impact the Travellers' activities in various ways. It will become apparent to them that some government officials have developed a siege mentality and just want to plod through another day without having to confront problems they cannot solve. Others are trying to break the cycle of decline but becoming desperate. There are also some who seem unconcerned. Either they are enormously in denial or something else is afoot – which is the case with most of them. Those officials with connections to the factions or who are profiting from the situation are generally more hopeful and less stressed than the others, except when something goes wrong for their faction.

The Travellers' task is to raise a military force if they do not already have one and to carry out a series of missions for the planetary government. At the beginning of the ticket the client does not have a specific set of tasks laid out for the Travellers. This is partly because the situation keeps changing and partly due to cross-cutting agendas within the government. The Travellers' unit will be a response force initially, until it has proven its effectiveness. This means its actions will be directed according to what is happening in the three major conflict areas.

The first mission given to the Travellers is quite simple. They are ordered into the Eastern Plains, to escort government investigators tasked with determining whether a recent clash between factions was legal and justified. From there, the Travellers are redeployed to the Amur-Vilyuy Basin to support a government force that has got itself into trouble.

Payment for a ticket is usually based on a multiple of the standard salaries for a unit of the type. Since the Travellers might be fielding anything from a section to a company the ticket does not specify the amount. The Referee should determine the pay offer based on the closest parallel unit. For example, standard salaries for an infantry platoon would be Cr40000 per month, so if the Travellers' force is in the 20–40 personnel range this would be appropriate. The Referee can amend the figure as necessary.

A security mission is typically two months' standard salaries per month of the ticket, plus a bonus. It would be reasonable to offer an additional month's salaries as a hiring bonus and a bonus for successful competition of the mission. Completion bonuses can vary considerably but 10–25% of the total amount paid in the course of the ticket is not uncommon depending on the degree of success.

Payment is received immediately upon signature of the contract in the case of the hiring bonus, then monthly thereafter. Completion bonus is payable when the unit stands down from its deployment. All payments are lodged with the licensing agency so will be paid even if the government collapses. However, at the discretion of the licensing agency some or all of the fee can be withheld or, if already paid, imposed as a fine. The licensing agency makes this decision, not the client, but the client can make a case for withholding fees if the mercenaries default on their contract.

For example, the Travellers have raised an understrength platoon with a few transport vehicles, sufficient to count as an infantry platoon for the purposes of salaries. Standard rate is two months' salaries per month in the field, which would be Cr80000. The Referee rounds this down to Cr75000 as a comfortable figure. The hiring bonus is calculated based on a month's salaries – Cr40000 – but the referee modifies this to Cr50000.

The unit will receive Cr50000 immediately upon signing the contract and Cr75000 at the end of every month. This is normally in the form of a bank transfer to the unit's account but other arrangements can be made. A partial month may or may not be considered completed. Sometimes a client will pay the mercenaries to the end of a partial month, whilst others calculate the fee down to the minute. A common compromise is for the mercenaries to remain on-contract to the end of the final month and be paid for it, using the time for recreation and maintenance. An agreement is usually in place so the unit can be deployed in an emergency but the client would have to justify this to the licencing agency. Occasionally a client tries to pull a fast one by running a unit around doing odd jobs in this period, a practice vigorously opposed by most licensing agencies.

Bonuses for success will be based on the degree of success achieved – as perceived by the client and agreed by the licensing agency – and the time served. So, if the Travellers' unit deploys for two months, earning Cr75000 per month, and received a Cr50000 hiring bonus its success bonus would be based on Cr 200000. A bonus of 15% would be Cr30000. Some units distribute some or all of this kind of bonus among the personnel of the unit or award it to deserving members. A guideline on the level of success bonus payable is found on page 30.

Ticket Success Indicators

The Travellers will not know ahead of time what they are expected to do, so cannot predict the Ticket Success Indicators at the beginning of the mission. However, once events begin to unfold it will become apparent that certain actions are necessary if the Travellers mission to New Moscow is to be considered a success.

1. **CRITICAL:** Disprove the allegations in Courtroom Drama.
2. **IMPORTANT:** Behave with restraint and present the government in a positive light.
3. **ROUTINE:** Complete the investigation and uncover the truth in Jine the Cavalry.
4. **ROUTINE:** Salvage the situation in Reinforcing Defeat.
5. **ROUTINE:** Get the convoy through in Home Run.

The maximum TSI for this ticket is 13. For the ticket to be considered any sort of success, the planetary government has to survive. The mercenaries might come out looking quite good even if this does not happen but their contracts will be terminated and they will not receive their bonus. If an Imperial intervention against the planetary government takes place the Travellers will not be prosecuted for defending their client against forces other than the Imperial military but certainly will be investigated if they fire upon Imperial personnel. This can still be judged a 'lawful mercenary operation' if circumstances seemed to require it but the Travellers will have some explaining to do. Otherwise, even if the planetary government collapses the mercenary marketplace will judge the Travellers on what they did rather than what happened beyond their control. Thus it is possible to come out of this ticket with a positive TSI and a good reputation despite bonuses not being paid because the client ceased to exist.

CHAPTER - FOUR

INTO THE FIELD

The Travellers will need a mercenary force of some kind to take part in the conflict on New Moscow. If the Travellers are being created for this adventure they can substitute some of their Benefit rolls for equipment, personnel and other necessities as described in *Book 2*. An existing band of Travellers can also participate in the adventure by using their resources to put a unit together. If neither of these conditions apply, the Travellers will be provided with resources to raise a unit. This should only be done if the Travellers cannot create a force of their own, no matter how small.

If the Travellers lack the resources to raise a force, they will be assigned a contingent of personnel sufficient to put together an infantry section 8–10 personnel strong, including the Travellers, equipped with standard TL9 small arms and personal equipment. They are volunteers from the planetary armed forces and are a little more motivated than most of their peers but of equivalent training standard. Their starting CEI is 6. If this method is used the Travellers will have at their disposal a section-sized force but that does not mean it has to be organised as a standard infantry section. The Travellers can set up their unit any way they see fit, following the process on page 6 of *Book 2* to rate it.

If the Travellers are raising a unit using their own resources, they do not receive personnel from the planetary army. As always they can organise their force as they see fit and buy whatever equipment they can get. The planetary armed forces of New Moscow will provide the Travellers with TL7 small arms and personal kit if they cannot get anything better but they will benefit from obtaining higher-tech gear. Even TL9 equipment is sufficiently far ahead of what the locals have as to give a significant advantage. A Traveller with a TL9 missile launcher is a match for any armoured vehicle they are likely to encounter.

After following the process of raising a mercenary unit, the Travellers must complete a Force Capability Record.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Travellers' Mercenary Unit	
Unit Size		
Unit Type		
Unit TL		
Mobility Type		
Combat		
Bombardment		
Aerospace		
Support		
CEI or DEI		
Morale		
Reputation		

DEPLOYING

The mercenaries arrive (or perhaps the unit is raised) at New Moscow Downport. The Travellers will notice the temporary forward base set up by the Imperial peacekeeping force – they can hardly miss the presence of a full lift infantry brigade – and the rather less impressive elements of the planetary army at the port. This is a small security contingent; the rest of the army is based elsewhere. There may also be other mercenary units based at the port or members of them enjoying some rest time.

The Travellers' point of contact is Assistant Minister Edhuart Alvarez, who is responsible for overseeing the mercenary force. Alvarez is an honest man and has resisted the temptation to align himself with one of the factions despite the amount of money coming in by way of Real Future in particular. He is dispirited however; astute Travellers will notice he is merely going through the motions and does not seem to have any real hope of success.

Nevertheless, Alvarez welcomes the Travellers to New Moscow and ensures their force has suitable billets at the port. They will be given an enclosure suitable for their unit size, with prefabricated buildings as accommodation and workshops. Troops will be granted the freedom of the port and vouchers that can be redeemed in entertainment and recreation venues. These are not especially generous and it is obvious the world government hopes to recoup some of their investment in terms of stimulating local businesses. With a brigade of Imperial troops in town, some establishments are experiencing a boom period.

Alvarez explains the situation in general terms. There are three primary regions, each with a dominant faction. He stresses there is no war here; the factions are engaged in very hostile business activities but these are aimed at one another. Nobody is shooting at the planetary army and nobody should be shooting at the mercenaries either. However, the factions are gradually consolidating their dominance, by force if necessary, and at times have escalated the situation beyond what is acceptable. Put simply, Alvarez says, if two farmers' collectives want to fight over a field of grain, they are welcome. If they start murdering innocent people there will have to be in investigation and in such a tense situation a heavily armed neutral party is the best way to ensure escalation does not occur. He delicately tiptoes around the question of why the planetary army cannot be that neutral party, quickly moving on to the mercenaries' first task. It is not complex and should not be dangerous, he says. All the mercenaries have to do is to escort a party of government investigators out into the Eastern Plains to collect evidence about a recent incident. Apparently the dominant local faction, the Eastern Loyalist Collective, intercepted a strike launched at one of its grain terminals. The resulting running battle was nothing out of the ordinary but the faction has requested an investigation. It is claiming the attackers were 'obviously not bandits' and may have been in the pay of one of the other factions.

The attackers were driven to ground in a nearby town where they took hostages. Several people were killed in an attempt to free them, allegations are being thrown around at random and the government needs to find out what actually happened. The mercenaries will protect the investigators and ensure they have access to crime scenes and evidence. They must be seen to be impartial and fair, and Alvarez stresses again that this is not a war zone. There is some violence on-planet but the mercenaries may shoot only in self-defence or to protect their charges.

CHAPTER - FIVE

JINE THE CAVALRY

The mercenaries' first assignment is in the Eastern Plains. They are to escort a party of eight investigators to visit the site of a recent attack and ensure they have access to all necessary sites and information. The Travellers can assign as much or as little of their force as they like to this mission and might undertake it with a portion of their force before the remainder is finished forming.

If the Travellers have their own transport, the client would prefer they use it. If not, road vehicles will be provided. There is a rail link to the Eastern Plains but it would not be wise to depend on the people who are being investigated to provide vehicles. The initial base of operations is the city of Isikhraal, close to where the incident took place.

Upon arriving, the mercenaries will find the local authorities and the officials of the Eastern Loyalist Collective friendly and welcoming – on the surface at least – and well-prepared for the arrival of the investigators. They have been given rooms in the city's administrative centre to work from, along with accommodation in local hotels. The city is not capable of accommodating more than about 20 people all in the same place and there are eight investigators, so the Travellers may have to decide whether to accept being split up.

There is no ill-will on the part of the ELC. Indeed, its leaders are confident the investigators will uncover the truth about the incident, which is to their advantage. There is some tension, since the ELC could be seen as technically being in rebellion against the central government but overall the ELC wants the investigators to complete their mission unhindered. The same cannot be said, unfortunately, for the investigators themselves. They were selected by a panel heavily influenced by the Real Future faction and are extremely biased. Indeed, they have been instructed to 'discover' that the attackers really were just random bandits with no connection to any other faction.

THE INVESTIGATION

There are two main sites that have to be investigated. One is the village of Tanshaddar, where the gunmen took refuge. The other is the grain plant that was the original target. The investigators plan to deal with both simultaneously, with two or three personnel at each site and a couple at their base in Isikhraal. Information will be fed back to them in real time and processed. The mercenaries are expected to provide security for all three groups simultaneously, although it is not expected there will be much of a threat.

Additional security has been assigned in the form of several marshals of the Eastern Plains Security Initiative (ESPI), who are more commonly referred to simply as 'the cavalry'. Some of their number do indeed ride horses and all are capable of it even if using SUVs to get around. The presence of the marshals might cause friction, or even alarm, but the mercenaries will not find anything suspicious about their behaviour. They are genuinely there to protect the investigators and facilitate their work, and if they do point out leads the investigators have missed this is a secondary consideration.

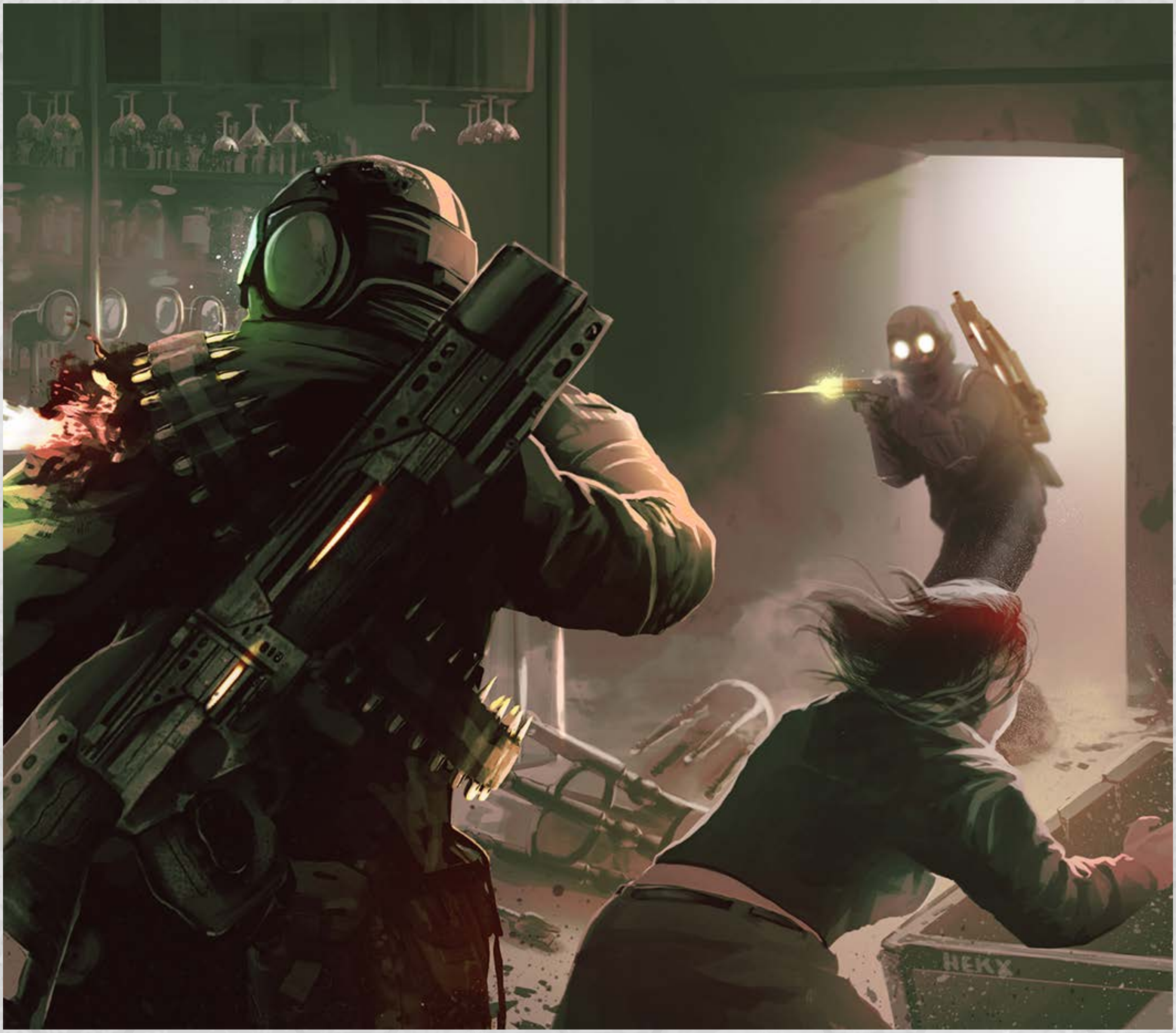
However, whilst the mercenaries are likely to find the marshals agreeable, the investigators do not. They will accuse the marshals of being overbearing and intrusive, and of trying to guide the investigation to a conclusion in their favour. There is some truth in this but the marshals are nothing like as difficult as the investigators portray them. Nonetheless, the mercenaries will be requested to keep the ESPI marshals at a distance. They might at some point become suspicious that they, too, are being kept busy and away from the investigation.

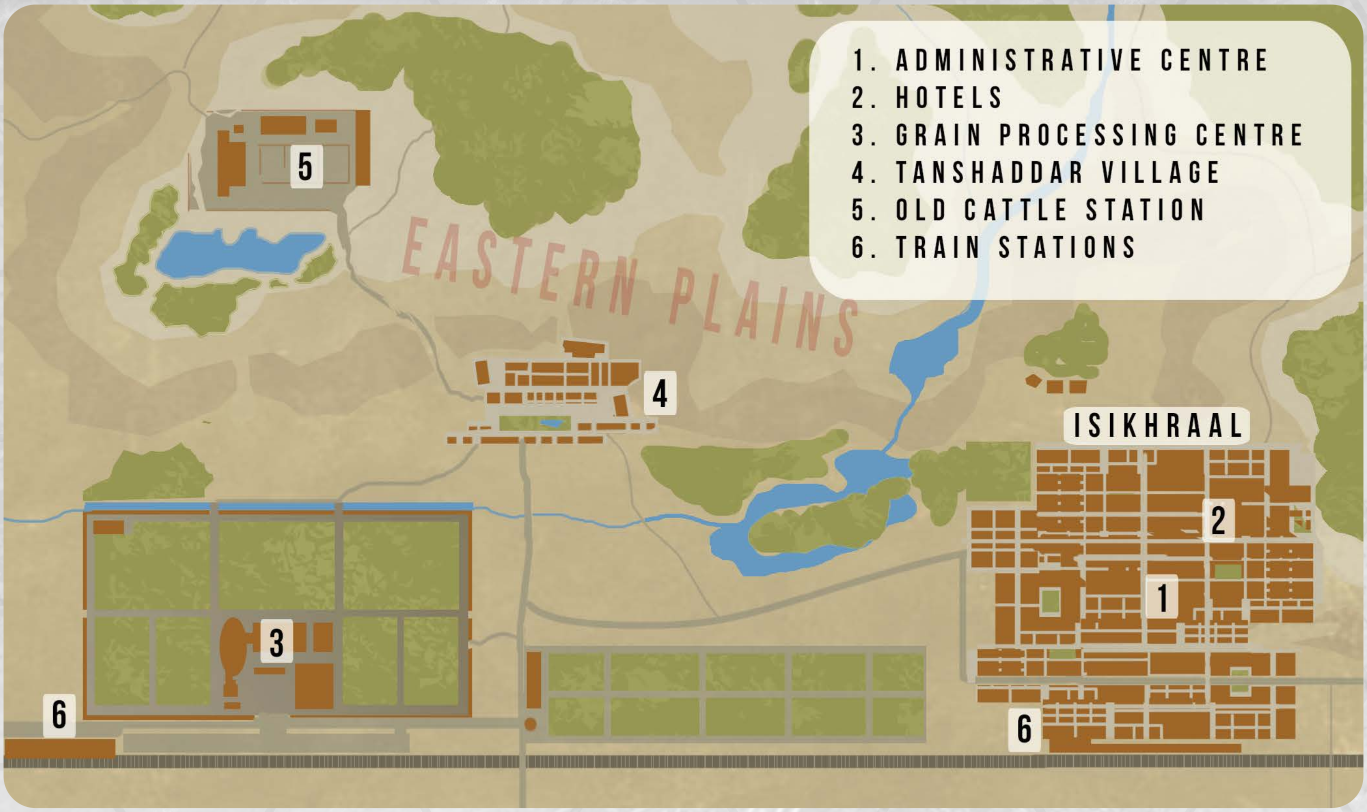
The grain processing centre is centrally located for the surrounding farms, which means it is not in a city. It has its own rail link and a rather poorly surfaced road and other than the two dozen staff who are assigned there in week-long rotations, there are no residents. Most of the staff are volunteers with ESPI and participated in the defence of the plant. Along with the handful of marshals and active-duty volunteers who led the interception of the approaching force, they tell the same story.

The attackers were well equipped by the standards of New Moscow. They were armed with assault rifles and had a machinegun or two. They also operated in a disciplined fashion. When the intercepting ESPI force approached the attackers dismounted from their vehicles and carried out a fire-and-manoeuvre attack, which failed largely due to the ESPI's tactics. Keeping horses and vehicles close to the rear, the ESPI force made a fighting retreat, keeping the range long where their rifles and superior standards of marksmanship outmatched the attackers' assault weapons. Ultimately the attackers retired but were intercepted by ESPI reinforcements and took refuge in the village of Tanshaddar. Despite taking hostages they were eventually dislodged, with most of their number escaping in vehicles. Some of the attackers were captured at the village or picked up, wounded, from the combat zone.

The investigators seem to believe the attackers were simply well-organised bandits, perhaps supplied with weaponry by one of the other factions in the hope they would cause trouble. The witnesses who fought against them say they were far too well coordinated to be mere bandits and suspect they may be mercenaries or paid insurgents serving one of the other factions.

Witnesses at the village were mostly too frightened or confused to remember many details about their ordeal, although most consider the attackers to have seemed 'military' in the way they communicated and followed orders. Their equipment was also highly uniform, with matching body armour, magazine holders and weapons. Clothing was similar too. Not quite a uniform as such but it did seem that the attackers had obtained coveralls from the same source.





The investigators are reluctant to allow the mercenaries to interview witnesses, if they express a desire to do so, arguing that they should be left alone to do their jobs whilst the mercenaries do what they are paid for. The investigators can only put up so much resistance if the Travellers insist but will throw obstacles in the way. Their favoured gambit is inventing spurious errands and things to check on for the mercenaries. This will be over-used to the point where it is obvious the investigative team are trying to prevent the mercenaries from conducting their own investigation.

If the Travellers arrange it, they can interview the handful of 'bandits' captured by the ESPI forces. The 'bandits' all tell the same story. They are members of a local defence association who were responding to a report of bandits in the area and the ESPI force opened fire on them without warning. If pushed on this story the captives will try to bluster or refuse to answer questions but eventually they will have to admit they are 'not from round here' and were recruited as sort-of-mercenaries by an unnamed client who wanted to help protect the region.

This story is close to the truth but the fact is the attackers were recruited by Real Future to cause trouble as a pretext to sending a force to 'help protect' the region. Essentially, the bandit raids were a precursor to a large-scale military operation that would take over a significant part of the Eastern Plains. The attackers have been assured they will be protected and have an incentive to keep their mouths shut about the real situation. Their protection, at least in part, has been provided for by influencing the investigators.

If the Travellers do not penetrate the wall of obfuscation the investigators will conclude the incident was an unfortunate result of trigger-happy elements within the ESPI opening fire without confirming the situation. They will lament the fact that there is a real problem with banditry in the region, which is escalating beyond the control of the central government and the EPL. This will lead to offers from Real Future to assist and a gradual movement towards large-scale intervention in the Eastern Plains.

IF YOU WANT TO HAVE A GOOD TIME, JINE THE CAVALRY...

Whilst the investigation is wrapping up, a senior marshal from the ESPI force approaches the Travellers. She has received word that the survivors of the attack on the grain facility are holed up in the hills not very far away. A request for assistance in apprehending them met with the usual response from central government; vaguely interested noises and multiple requests for clarification.

The marshal wants to short-circuit the process and capture the ‘bandits’ herself. She has a couple of dozen ESPI personnel available but would very much like the Travellers to assist.

This is outside the remit of the contract, unless the Travellers want to engage in some legal fiction. Arguably, capturing some of the attackers might assist the investigation and the presence of an armed gang just a few kilometres away might be taken as a threat to the investigators. This is a bit thin but sufficient to keep objections at bay. The investigators will flat-out forbid it if they get wind of what the Travellers have been asked to do. They argue that the mercenaries are present to protect them and facilitate the investigation, not to chase around the countryside after people who are probably not bad guys anyway. Of course, the investigators are not in the mercenaries’ chain of command and can be ignored, and cannot stop the Travellers if they proceed. There will be questions to answer when they return to the starport, however.

If the Travellers do agree to assist the ESPI marshals, they are shown maps of the area indicating a force of maybe 20 hostiles in the vicinity of an old cattle station in the hills. The marshals think the mercenaries’ firepower and neutral status might be sufficient to induce the hostiles to surrender peacefully. There is a real chance of this if the Travellers can get into a good position but there are problems.

The hostiles will know the marshals are coming, as they will be informed by the investigators as soon as one of them is able to send a message unobserved. If the marshals are not accompanied by the Travellers, they will be ambushed and driven off with casualties and the hostiles will slip away before reinforcements arrive. If the Travellers are present the ambush will still be attempted but the Travellers may spot it before it is sprung. Either way it will be fairly obvious the hostiles knew exactly where the ESPI force was heading and when it would arrive. The investigators will deny all knowledge, vow to find out who leaked the information and go through the motions of trying to ascertain who betrayed the ESPI force. Naturally, they will fail to do so.

It is possible the mercenaries might be able to persuade the ‘bandits’ to surrender. If not, they will have to deal with the ambush attempt or try to corner the hostiles near the cattle station. Either way, the hostiles will not fight to the end but will attempt to break contact and escape into rough country. The Travellers may find themselves pursuing part or all of the enemy force, possibly in conjunction with EPL mounted cavalry.

Characteristic	**Value**	**DM**
Force Name	Eastern Plains ‘Bandits’	—
Unit Size	Understrength Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	–1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	6	-1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	5	–1

CONCLUDING THE MISSION

This initial mission concludes when the Travellers escort the investigators back to the capital. If the mercenaries simply protected their charges as contracted, the investigators present their bogus conclusions and nobody will be any the wiser. The plans of the Real Future faction will be advanced. On the plus side, the mercenaries will have pleased the world government. The government receives a lot of money from Real Future and considerable bribes and influence were brought to bear over this matter. By either missing the clues or keeping quiet about them the mercenaries will have allowed the situation to develop as desired.

If the mercenaries have come to the conclusion that the investigators were wrong, they will find it difficult to get anyone to listen to them. They will be able to present their case if they are persistent. This will greatly displease Real Future and the officials it has in its pocket. There is nothing they can do overtly but the mercenaries will be given a subtle hint when their local supply line becomes impossibly snarled up. Supplies are redirected or short stopped by needy local units and when they do arrive they are not what was requisitioned. Personnel taking recreation at the starport will find themselves hassled by local law enforcement far more often than before and the government will begin passing spurious complaints to the unit’s commanders. The Travellers will find themselves bogged down in endless meetings to discuss a complaint from local residents or military units. Sooner or later they will realise they have offended someone with influence but at this point it will not be possible to find out who this is.

CHAPTER - SIX

REINFORCING DEFEAT

The next mission is necessitated by circumstances or so it appears. A planetary army formation has been sent into the Western Basin to 'demonstrate sovereignty and overlordship' and has run into trouble. The mercenaries are requested to assist this force in gaining control over the local area or withdrawing if necessary. If the mercenaries have disputed the findings of the investigation in the last mission, this request – which is phrased politely but a contractual requirement – comes whilst they are presenting their case. How they deal with this is up to them.

The mercenaries might wonder why this task has not been given to the rest of the planetary army or even the peacekeeping force. This is a very valid question, which will elicit the reply that there are complex circumstances, which will delay a response to an urgent situation. The mercenaries are informed that since they are in a position to do something right now, they have been tasked with the mission. This is all a bit vague but the government cannot admit the real reason it wants the mercenaries out of the capital. In addition to contesting the findings of the recent investigation (if they did) the mercenaries might become aware of a 'reorganisation' of weapons and ammunition, which is a cover for a transfer to the Real Future faction.

The transfer is by way of third parties and 'loyalist local defence associations' but it would not be difficult to figure out what is really happening if someone were inclined to try. Thus the faction's sympathisers within the government are keen to keep the Travellers out of the loop and in addition they really do need help extracting their force.

THE EXPEDITION

The governmental expedition was typical of the sort. Announced well ahead of time it was to be a pompous tour of several small towns under the guise of sweeping for insurgents and reassuring the populace by way of a highly visible military presence. The force selected was a composite battlegroup in company strength, with armoured reconnaissance vehicles, infantry in armoured transports and a platoon of light self-propelled artillery. In theory this is a potent force for the region but few had any illusions about its intent to fight.

Sweeps of this sort are advertised for the political capital gained by being seen to mount them but also to allow the factions to get out of the way. A brush with armed criminals taking advantage of the situation is acceptable and even desirable but the government desperately wants to avoid clashes with faction forces. Those with an interest in such things may notice that sweeps of this sort tend to take place soon after Real Future has annexed and 'pacified' an area and upon finding little evidence of ongoing conflict the government has an excuse not to take further interest.

This expedition has gone a little differently. The usual half-hearted attempt to make contact with forces skirmishing in the region led to the pursuit of a small group, which is in and of itself not uncommon. What has changed is that the battlegroup remained in contact and fought a sharp action at a small village located on a river crossing. Laagering for the night in a mood of self-congratulation that was wholly unwarranted, the force celebrated chasing a couple of dozen lightly armed insurgents out of the area. It says much about the state of the planetary forces that this seemed like an achievement. The fact that the battlegroup got itself trapped is another indicator of how inept and apathetic many formations have become.

The battlegroup failed to post suitable pickets and was surprised the following morning to find a significant force deployed to its front. This was a 'provisional security battalion' fielded by the Alliance of the Western Rivers. Its commander curtly informed the government battlegroup that the bridge forming its line of retreat had been rigged with explosives during the night and was zeroed for artillery fire. A standoff began, which is still ongoing.

THE STANDOFF

The situation represents an escalation of the tensions between the Alliance of the Western Rivers and the central government. The AWR has tired of inaction or pretend-action on the part of the government and is aware of the increasing influence of Real Future. Its leaders – or at least, some of them – have decided to take direct action. The encounter with insurgents was real enough but it has provided an opportunity the AWR intends to exploit.

The commander of the 'provisional security battalion' is a self-appointed colonel by the name of Alexander Wishart. Wishart is one of the harshest critics of the government, not without reason, and also a proponent of radical action. His plan is to coerce the government force into handing over their armoured vehicles and artillery, which will greatly enhance the combat capabilities of the local elements of the AWR. Ideally this will be done without bloodshed, in which case it should be possible to get the government to retroactively recognise the transfer as some kind of local security enhancement program.

The government might actually agree to this, as the alternative is to fight the AWR. Real Future would be very happy to see that happen as it is sure to create additional opportunities for the faction to exploit. There are thus several ways this situation could play out, some of them quite detrimental to the AWR. Not surprisingly many of its leaders are horrified at the actions being taken in their name but Colonel Wishart firmly believes that his actions will strengthen both the AWR as a whole and his position within it.

Wishart's 'battalion' is one of the premier fighting formations of the AWR but that does not equate to formal organisation. The force is made up of seven small 'companies' commanded by captains Wishart has appointed. Total strength is a little over 300 personnel, loosely organised as a militia. Personnel are competent and experienced but have gaps in their knowledge as they have never received a full training package.

Company A is under Wishart's direct command. It contains about 40 personnel, most of whom are assigned as three person crews of converted pickup trucks and SUVs, most of which mount a support weapon such as a light machinegun on a pintle mount. Vehicles operate in pairs, with Wishart commanding from the turret of an armoured car somehow obtained from the government. Company A is normally used as a mobile reserve or striking force and is quite adept at hit-and-run skirmishing using its vehicles.

Company B is the battalion's artillery contingent… such as it is. The force possesses three 100mm mortars mounted on the beds of converted trucks, a towed 120mm howitzer and some excitingly inaccurate home-made multiple rocket launchers mounted on pickup trucks. Ammunition is always in short supply but the force can put down artillery fire if Wishart has to carry out his threat.

Company C is a sort of reconnaissance formation formed of self-styled sharpshooters using SUVs, pickup trucks and motorcycles. It is the most unruly part of a very loosely run force and its personnel are the most likely to start shooting. There is more ego than military competence about this unit, which is about 30 strong and considers itself to be the elite of the entire AWR ground forces.

Company D, E and F are infantry formations mostly made up of experienced militia fighters. The companies are about 60 strong, with a mix of civilian and military small arms and very few support weapons. Personnel ride in converted farm trucks and dismount to fight. There are no internal sub-units as such but typically groups of friends fight together and are capable of supporting other groups in a rudimentary fashion.

Company G is about 25 strong and represents an attempt to create a close-assault formation. This unit has a high proportion of light automatic weapons along with handguns, shotguns and home-made satchel charges. Some of the personnel in this unit are experienced at handling explosives, although mainly to clear obstructions on a farm rather than demolishing solid structures.

The 'battalion' styles itself as a formal military force and tries to interact with regular army units using proper protocol and military courtesy. The results are rather mixed, especially since some elements of Wishart's force are more playing at being an army than committed to their cause. Pretentiousness is inevitable and can get out of hand at times.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Wishart's 'Security Battalion'	—
Unit Size	Understrength Battalion	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	3	–1
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	6	–1
Morale	7	0
Reputation	6	0

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Wishart has assaulted the government battlegroup commander with a barrage of accusations about overstepping authority – which the Travellers might find hilarious given the circumstances – and at the same time launched into a tirade about the ineffectual nature of government operations. His solution is for the government force to hand over its heavy weapons and accept escort out of a region it – according to Wishart – clearly cannot control. The last part is right but that does not change the fact that the battlegroup is effectively being robbed at gunpoint.

The standoff has allowed both forces to dig in and in this at least the government battlegroup has done a good job. Its commander has requested assistance and instructions and has been told to find a negotiated settlement to the situation without surrendering any weapons or being seen to be run off by a band of militia. This is an unrealistic demand and communications from the central government have been unhelpfully contradictory. As usual, the government is not willing or able to take decisive action but wants a positive outcome to somehow materialise. The only hope for that is the Travellers.

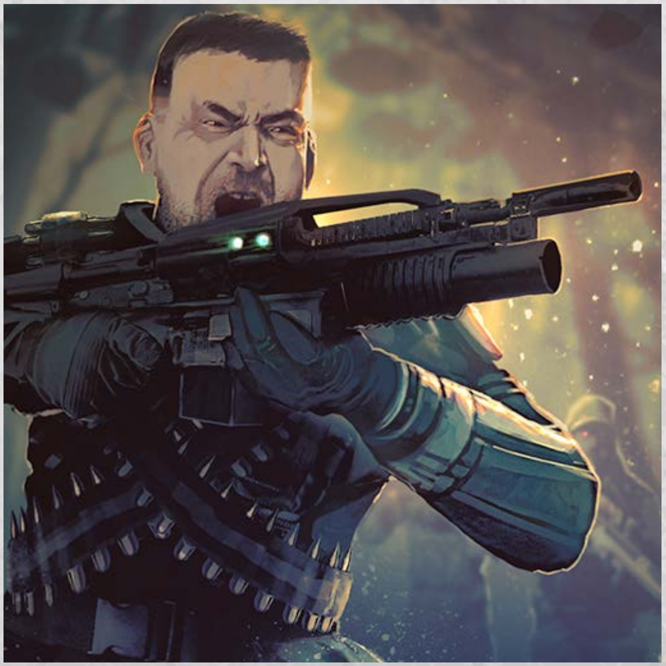
RESOLUTION

If the Travellers cannot create a resolution of some kind, it is inevitable that fighting will break out between the battlegroup and Wishart's force. It might be possible to step back from a brief and inconclusive exchange of gunfire but there is a real chance the battlegroup will attempt a surprise breakout that will bring about a full-scale battle. The bridge will be blown as soon as the government force moves in that direction and a hail of rocket and artillery fire will be directed at any force trying to make a crossing. This might not be very effective but there will be casualties all the same. Attempting to crash through the field fortifications of Wishart's force is a better option but it still leaves the government battlegroup on the wrong side of the river and vulnerable to harassment as it tries to find an alternative crossing point.

The Travellers have many options in this situation. They might try to negotiate with either or both sides and broker an agreement or they might take more robust actions. Their remit is rather vague, requiring them to assist the government force and this can be interpreted more than one way. Getting the force's personnel out of the trap they find themselves in might constitute effective assistance, although it will be hard to sell the battlegroup commander on the idea of surrendering weaponry.

Wishart is equally difficult to persuade. Where the battlegroup commander knows a court-martial is inevitable if weaponry is surrendered, Wishart has big ambitions that will be thwarted if he is forced to back down. He sees the acquisition of heavy weaponry as the only way to forestall a takeover by Real Future and his plans to eventually be sole leader of the AWR revolve around preventing this. The Travellers might have to broker a compromise or negotiate from a position of strength. This might be real or perceived; a good bluff could work. One possibility would be to fake assurances that the peacekeeping force will intervene or convince the opposing commanders that the Travellers wield far more power than they do. A position of strength might also be obtained by seizing something of value such as Wishart's artillery.

Other options include removing the demolition charges from the bridge and either stalling Wishart's response as the government battlegroup mounts up to charge across it or somehow protecting the battlegroup from artillery and direct attack. An inconclusive engagement might not result in open hostilities between the government and the AWR, whereas if the Travellers and the battlegroup simply fight it out with Wishart's battalion it is inevitable the AWR will be declared an illegal organisation and an enemy of the national government. This will be pushed by Real Future sympathisers in the government and is likely to spell the doom of the Alliance of the Western Rivers. The Travellers may or may not care about that and might be quite happy to see Real Future use the government to fight its opponents then roll in and take over. Mercenaries see this sort of thing happen all the time and are prone to shrug and collect their fee.



CHAPTER-SEVEN

COURTROOM DRAMA

By this point in the mission the Travellers are likely to be aware of just how ineffectual their client is and where the real power on New Moscow lies. They are still on contract to the government, however, and the reputation of their unit would be harmed if they pulled out. If the Travellers decide to do this at any point, they will face tough questions from the licencing agency they are working with. See *Pulling Out* on page 29 for more information.

The Referee should make sure the Travellers are aware of the long-term consequences of not fulfilling their contract. It is one thing to try and fail – that happens to most units from time-to-time – but to wilfully abandon a contract demonstrates the unit is unreliable and finding clients willing to pay for its services will be more difficult thereafter. The Travellers do have causes for concern, however. The 'limited support' promised by the contract was always very limited but as time goes on it begins to dry up entirely. Sometimes this is characterised by the unexplained non-arrival of supplies, sometimes by petty obstructions. The Travellers should be able to figure out that someone is trying to interfere in their business.

If the Travellers think to investigate they may be able to uncover some useful facts. Something as simple as collating causal observations will provide anecdotal evidence, which may be useful to the Travellers' intelligence specialists – or whoever gets the job of filling in if the unit does not have them. If the Travellers carry out an intelligence mission of some kind this will have to be played out but will provide much more solid data.

An intelligence mission is an action connected with intelligence gathering or analysis, or both. There are two likely missions, although the Travellers might come up with something else. If the Travellers can gain access to the government's internal financial records they will be able to see exactly how much money comes in from Real Future and where it goes. Public records are not sufficient for this, so the Travellers will need to hack a government computer or obtain physical copies of accounts. This is not permitted by their remit and asking directly will both raise suspicions and result in refusal. Covert action is necessary, either directly or through a sympathetic or coerced local official.

The alternative is to get multiple officials to admit where money comes from and goes. This could be done by intimidation, coercion, persuasion or deception… or a combination of all of these methods. Given the complex internal political situation at the capital it is unlikely anyone will want to go on record speaking out against the financial misconduct of others unless they have something to gain from it, which is not the case here. However, the Travellers may gain insight into the situation and an idea of what is about to happen.

The intelligence operation, if it happens at all, should be resolved as an Intelligence Event. If the Travellers do not carry out any action before the legal problem begins to unfold they will be able to throw together what they know as an Intelligence Event but will have little to work with. If they do carry out one or both of the actions noted above or some other meaningful intelligence work the Referee must resolve this either in abstract as an Operation or as a detailed mini-adventure.

The Intelligence Event is resolved as an Investigate check on the part of the Travellers' designated representative or intelligence officer, with DMs applying as noted below.

If the Travellers did no intelligence work: DM-4
If the Travellers collated casual observations and analysed them but did no other intelligence work: DM-2
If the Travellers attempted one or more intelligence operations but did not achieve much success: DM+0.
If the Travellers successfully carried out one intelligence operation: DM+2
If the Travellers cared out extensive successful intelligence work such as two successful operations: DM+4

Intelligence Event Outcome

Effect + DMs	Result
–6 or worse	The Travellers learned nothing of use, caused suspicion among their opponents and ultimately confused themselves about what is going on. DM-6 applies to the legal case, below.
–4 to –5	The Travellers obtained information that seems useful but which leads to false conclusions. DM-4 applies to the legal case, below.
–3 to –1	The Travellers obtained information that might be useful in figuring out what is about to happen, but which is easily dismissed during the legal case. DM-2 applies resolution of the case.
0	The Travellers gained some useful information and will have a little warning before the legal case is launched, but gain no DM to resolve it.
1–3	The Travellers learned some facts that are awkward for the opponents. DM +1 applies to resolving the legal case.
3–5	The Travellers have evidence or witnesses who can disprove at least some of the allegations. DM+2 applies to resolving the legal case.
6 or better	The Travellers have solid evidence that could demolish the legal case. DM +4 applies.

A COURTROOM COUP

If the Travellers have not been paying attention the next move on the part of Real Future might come as a complete surprise. If they have been a bit more careful about observing their immediate political surroundings they may have some warning or even some good evidence.

Real Future's trump card in its bid for de facto control of the world of New Moscow is the Imperial peacekeeping force. There is little prospect of bribing the force to become involved and Real Future has no political influence offworld to coerce its leaders but there is a possibility of triggering an intervention against the world government by presenting evidence of corruption and collusion with the other factions. This is perhaps a bit of a long shot but the faction senses an opportunity and does not believe there is anything to lose from trying.

The legal challenge is based upon the rather hypocritical idea that the world government is in the pocket of the other factions and has committed war crimes. The latter is nonsense; the government's troops have been avoiding contact with anyone who can shoot back and have fought only a handful of skirmishes in the past months. Nevertheless, Real Future intends to present fabricated evidence that secret government operations have targeted its non-combatant personnel. They will go so far as to claim that the Travellers' unit carried out some of the strikes. In addition, Real Future has fabricated evidence that money it has been paying to the government in good faith, in an effort to shore up the regime, has been funnelled into the hands of 'warlords and renegades' – by which Real Future means the other factions.

If the Travellers learned that something was afoot as a result of their intelligence work they have a little time to prepare. If not, the first they know of the legal case is when a summons arrives to a hearing to be held the very next day. Whilst this is irregular, there is a state of emergency in place and an Imperial intervention may be on the cards. Time is of the essence.

The Case For Intervention

The legal case heard by a tribunal headed by the Imperial Knight assigned to the world. The commander of the Imperial intervention force and the assigned negotiator fill the other two places. The Travellers may find this reassuring – at least these individuals are not directly involved in local politics.

A supposedly independent legal team, acting on behalf of 'the people of New Moscow' presents the allegations. There is a fair amount of rhetoric about the corrupt and dictatorial government, which plays on the fact that a great many new laws have been passed in recent months. The allegations are then laid out.

1. The government of New Moscow has been funding warlords and renegades using money taxed from its people and donated in good faith by the loyal members of the New Future business group.
2. The government of New Moscow has been using its mercenaries to conduct covert strikes, assassinating opponents of the government and destroying their assets.

The first set of allegations is backed up by a lot of claims about the real intentions behind new laws and their implications for the people of New Moscow. Much of this comes down to the idea that the government is enriching itself by oppressing the people. Accounts are presented, which look authentic and show large sums passed to the Western Rivers and Eastern Plains factions along with various government cronies and some unspecified third parties. These are claimed to be warlords, bandit gangs and illicit arms dealers – all of whom are working with the government to create a new, oppressive regime that will turn the world of New Moscow into a cash-cow for a few top officials.

There is actually some truth in some of this; cash has been diverted to projects without proper oversight and some embezzlement has taken place. However, the accounts are distorted or outright falsified and the witnesses are not telling the truth. The Travellers may know this if they have conduced good intelligence work and may even be able to prove it. They will get their chance once the prosecution is finished presenting its case.

The second allegation rests on grainy gun-camera footage, eyewitness accounts and emotive pictures of bodies and damaged installations that have no context. This is accompanied by lurid accusations of war crimes and atrocities that the Travellers know they had nothing to do with – if they happened at all – but may have to prove otherwise. The legal team ends with an impassioned plea to the tribunal to authorise an intervention. The people of New Moscow need help and protection from the government and its hired thugs…

The Case Against Intervention

A suspiciously large number of government officials are unavailable to take part in proceedings and for a time it seems the case – thin as it is – might succeed for lack of opposition. Minister Alvarez, the Travellers' liaison and direct contact on New Moscow, takes it upon himself to fight the government's case – or more accurately to rebut the allegations and prevent Real Future from toppling a government that seems to want this to happen.

Alvarez is no lawyer but has found some advisors and is cobbling together a case for non-intervention. He will request assistance from the Travellers. If they decline, Alvarez and his team can be treated as having DM+1 in legal matters and will do their best. The Travellers have it in their power to win here and can use their own best Advocate DM if they take part. They should be invited to present a defence or to attempt to demolish the Real Future arguments. Simple denial will not be enough; they will have to demonstrate that evidence is false or at least inconclusive.

The Travellers must make two Average (8+) Advocate checks, one for each set of allegations. A good, eloquent and persuasive argument is worth DM+1, as is some evidence such as a detailed analysis of observations. Solid evidence such as proof the Travellers were somewhere else when an alleged atrocity took place or a real set of accounts is worth DM+2. The Travellers might have to admit where they got their information but the tribunal is likely to consider such methods justified if they contradict obviously falsified data.

The Effect of these two Advocate checks is totalled and used as a DM when the final statements are made. The legal team representing 'the people' makes an impassioned plea for intervention and Minster Alvarez attempts to persuade the tribunal that it is spurious. The Referee should throw 2D and add the DMs thus far accrued.

If the Travellers fail to refute the court case their contract may end at this point. If they manage to prevent the courtroom coup they have one last task to perform.

The Case for Intervention On New Moscow

2D + DMs	Result
3–	The case is considered proven and Imperial intervention is formally requested by the chair of the tribunal. The mercenaries' contract is terminated and they are ordered to surrender to the intervention force.
4–6	The case is considered part-proven. The mercenaries are ordered to stand down and prepare for repatriation. Intervention is not requested but a 'pre-intervention study' is begun that will almost certainly lead to full intervention in due course.
5–7	Guilty, with some mitigating factors. DM+2 is applied to the Punishment table.
7–9	After much debate and some requests for additional investigation of the case if found not proven. No intervention is ordered.
10–12	The case is thrown out and the legal team are subjected to some scathing remarks from the chair.
13+	A different sort of intervention takes place, with several corrupt local officials arrested by the peacekeeping force for misfeasance in public office. Real Future is exposed as the architect of the situation and an investigation by the Ministry of Justice is requested.

CHAPTER-EIGHT

HOME RUN

Within hours of the intervention hearing, a flurry of encrypted communications begins flying around between the factions and some elements of the world government. Minister Alvarez urgently requests the Travellers' attendance at a briefing. It seems that an investigation into the government's corruption and the level of influence wielded by Real Future is certain to go ahead, which will have drastic ramifications for the faction as well as many government officials. The government has already begun a purge of 'corrupt' individuals, although it appears that what is really happening is that junior personnel are being thrown to the wolves as scapegoats. Meanwhile, Real Future has unilaterally offered to stand down its armed forces and surrender them along with all its assets to the central government.

It is quite obvious that this is another gambit, one that will put Real Future's assets in the hands of its chosen government officials and place them at the starport where they are protected by the no-fight agreement. Investigation may or may not produce a result that breaks Real Future but in the meantime (and permanently, if the Ministry of Justice does not find sufficient evidence to dismantle the faction) it will give control of New Moscow to Real Future. This is something of a gamble on the part of the faction but at the present time it can take advantage of the rules and laws in place and exploit them to give itself a real shot at an economic coup.

Real Future is forming a gigantic convoy with physical assets, hard currency and its military forces, and obviously planning to move the whole lot into the no-fight zone. If it gets there, in all probability the gambit will work – at least in the short term. However, if the convoy can be prevented from reaching the no-fight zone it can be worn down. Both the Western Rivers and Eastern Plains factions have pledged forces to do so and to stand down afterwards if the government requests offworld mediation. Both have small forces able to intercept the convoy and more readying for a long move. The planetary army has been ordered not to intervene and will remain in place to enforce the no-fight zone. Alvarez requests that the mercenaries find a suitable defensive location and rendezvous with their new allied forces. If the convoy can be stalled for two days it is likely enough additional units will arrive to force a surrender. It will be up to the mercenaries to select a spot and lead the defence.

AVAILABLE FORCES

The convoy is proceeding along one of the few suitable roads, at a speed limited by its size and composition. Elements of the Real Future forces are arrayed along the route flanking the convoy, leapfrogging forward to maintain an escort posture. A battalion-sized spearhead is proceeding down the road to clear a path. If this force can be stalled for long enough the whole convoy will have to stop. The spearhead is the best force the faction can put together and is equipped with armoured cars from the government's own arsenal as well as more support weapons than any force previously seen.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Real Future Spearhead	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Composite Armoured/ Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	8	+1
Bombardment	2	–2
Aerospace	1	–2
Support	2	–2
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	7	0

The Alliance of the Western Rivers has contributed a significant number of militia fighters organised as three provisional companies. They have good small arms imported from offworld but little transport. This force will have to be conveyed to the battle area in relays using trucks or some other form of transport arranged by the Travellers and has little tactical mobility. Dug in, its personnel can put of a good fight but they will be outmanoeuvred in the open.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	AWR Local Defence Militia	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	0
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	–2
CEI or DEI	5	–1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	4	–1

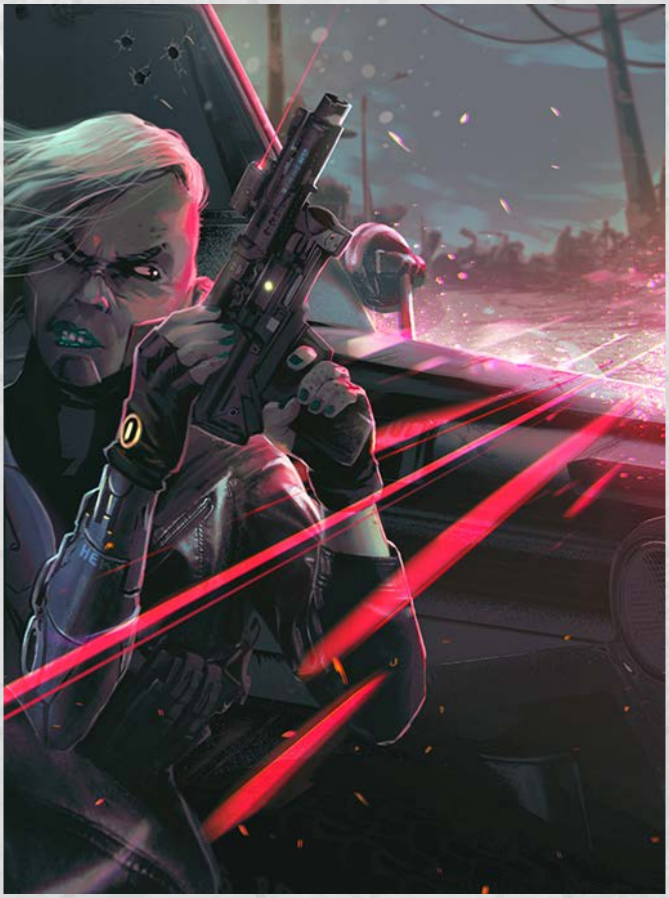
The Eastern Loyalist Collective has rushed two company-equivalents of volunteers to the area. They are equipped with a mix of horses and some light vehicles. Whilst mobile, this force is not resilient in the face of armoured vehicles.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	ELC Mounted Infantry Band	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Cavalry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Mounted	+2
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	8	0

HALTING THE CONVOY

In order to halt the convoy spearhead the Travellers will need to organise their forces. They have some militia with good small arms and mounted cavalry who excel at long-range skirmishing. Their opponents have an organised force with armoured cars in support. There are problems to be solved here. One option is just to dig in across the road and fight it out. The Real Future spearhead can go around but the convoy cannot, so they will have to do so. However they will probably manage it unless the Travellers find a way to nullify the firepower and armour of the Real Future force. Similarly, an elastic defence is problematic due to lack of mobility. The militia will be caught and massacred in the open or simply bypassed.

The brute force solution to the problem is to create a defence in depth with obstacles and fallback positions and perhaps obtain anti-armour weapons from somewhere. If the defenders can cling to their positions for long enough the convoy will be attacked from other directions and will either have to retire or be overwhelmed. This approach will require holding the defending force together in the face of heavy attack and the Real Future spearhead may be reinforced with units pulled from the escort.

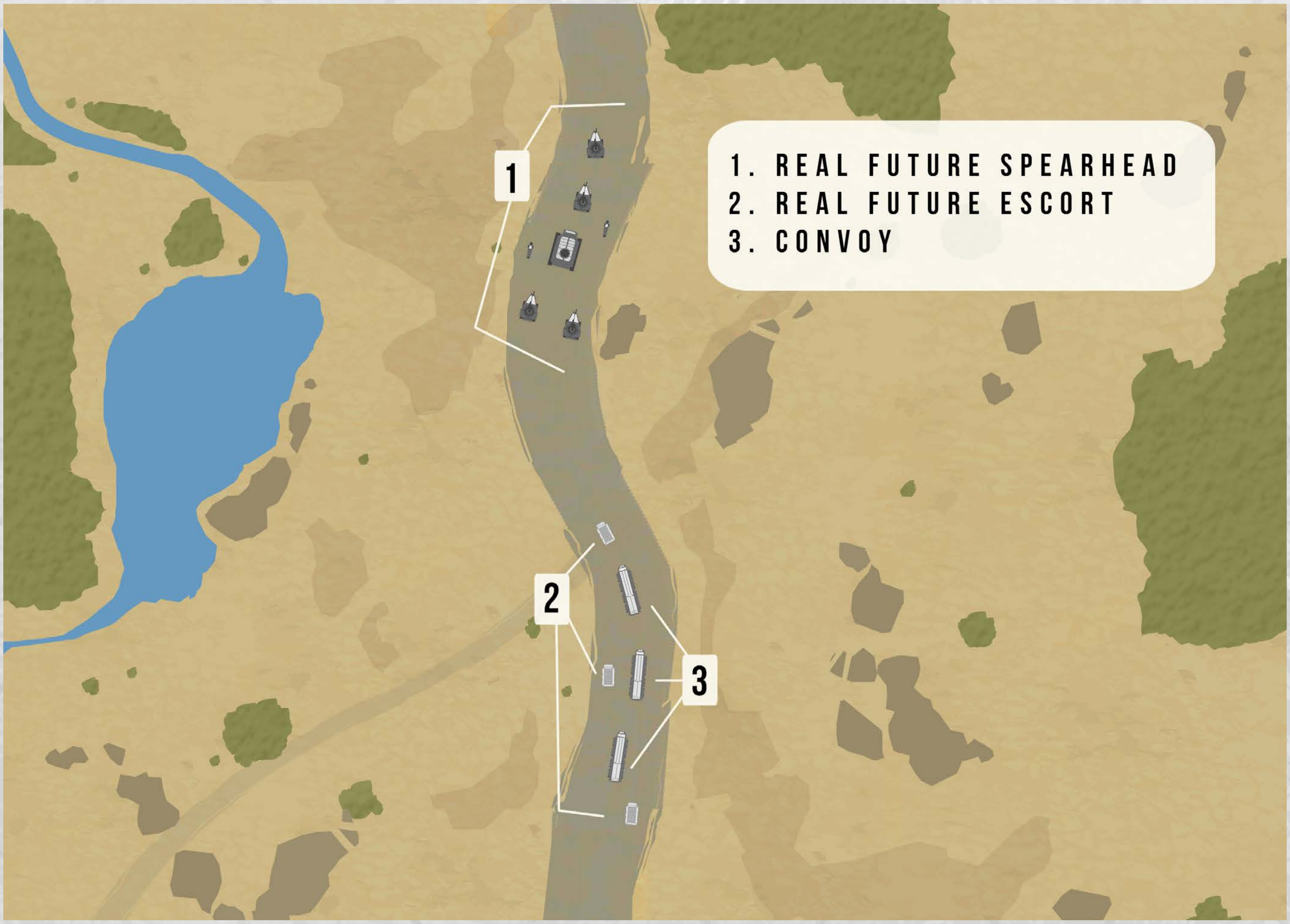


An alternative is to not actually block the road as such but create defended positions where they can harass any vehicle using it. This will force the spearhead to remove these positions one-by-one, allowing the Travellers to make use of their superior fighting power at each small fight in turn. The militia and cavalry can act as a backstop or as mobile skirmishers and can send detachments with the Travellers if they have enough vehicles. This approach may leave the road open for the spearhead force but create a situation where the convoy will take unacceptable casualties – which in turn bogs down the spearhead in unsuitable terrain, trying to clear strongpoints which are abandoned as they become unviable. The battle may come to resemble a caterpillar inching down the road.

Adventurous Travellers might try other methods. A couple of sharp stands by the mercenaries and a few sharpshooters will teach the spearhead force the need for caution, to the point where the spearhead might be held up for an hour trying to locate a suspected ambush, when the lone sniper who got their attention is long gone. Fake positions, ambushes, even a sneaky raid into the spearhead force's rear using grav vehicles, can all impose delay. Smart Travellers will realise they do not have to defeat the spearhead; they just have to prevent it clearing the way for the convoy.

WINNING AND LOSING

Success here is very clear-cut; either the Travellers stop the convoy or they do not. If it gets through, Real Future will be more or less in control of the government although it will not publicly assume control. Unless something changes, Real Future will continue to expand its power base through a series of small acquisitions and mergers, and develop increasing control over the central government. Eventually the only factor preventing collapse of the central government will be funds provided by the faction and when they are 'urgently reassigned to deal with crises elsewhere' the government will be unable to cope. After a brief period of disorder a new government, generously funded by Real Future, will be formed. If the Travellers stall the convoy for long enough the gambit will fail and Real Future will lose a significant portion of its assets.



CHAPTER-NINE

AFTERMATH

One way or another the Travellers have come to the end of their contract. It is to be hoped they completed their missions satisfactorily and are now due to stand down for a rest but it is possible the Travellers will have been forced to terminate their contract early or have chosen to do so.

SHUTTING THE DOOR

However they do it, if the Travellers can hold up the spearhead they will halt the convoy. With pressure increasing on its flanks its rear elements will turn around and head for home, and the mass relocation of assets will be prevented. The effects of this on Real Future may not immediately be apparent but with its assets cut off from the capital and many of its supporters compromised it will no longer be able to control the central government by threatening to cut funding. This will lead to a crisis that can be alleviated by a loan from the Imperial banks… but that comes at the price of outlawing Real Future. The other factions will stand down in return for guarantees and minor concessions and gradually the situation on New Moscow will stabilise.

The long-term situation remains nebulous but the government will be in a stronger position than it has been for years and has to accept Imperial oversight. This situation can be considered a win for the mercenaries – they have done what they were paid to do despite the client not really wanting them to do so. The Referee should proceed to the post-contract debrief. See Determining Success Level and Bonuses on page 30.

PULLING OUT

Most mercenary contacts have a few terms under which the unit can withdraw from a contact without penalty. This requires proving to the licencing agency that the client was indeed in default, which can be difficult. Even if the licensing authority is willing to accept a no-default withdrawal the unit's reputation can be damaged by rumours and suspicions.

The Travellers can still withdraw at any time if they feel the need. The client will not pay for repatriation of the unit, which means the Travellers must locate and pay for transportation offworld. In addition, the unit will be called upon to justify its actions. If the Travellers decide to simply pack up and move out, there is little the government can do to stop them. They will not receive any payment for that month and no bonuses even if the parts of the contract they have managed to complete are judged to be a success. A unilateral decision to withdraw will result in an inquiry by the licensing agency, which can be resolved using the Legal Proceedings rules on page 46 of *Book 2*.

If the Travellers instead want to negotiate an early end to their contract, they can put their case to the planetary government or ask the peacekeeping force to make a ruling. The Travellers will then make an Average (8+) Diplomat or Persuade check. The Effect of this check is applied to the initial Situation Indicator for the proposal, which begins at 7. For every three points of TSI the mercenaries have accrued from completing parts of the mission, DM+1 applies. If the result is refusal to release the mercenaries from their contract the Situation Indicator is retained as a running total. Once the Travellers have accrued more TSI they may make another Diplomat or Persuade check and add the result to their running total. Once the result indicates the government is willing to release the unit from its contract the Travellers may withdraw without penalty and the government will pay for their repatriation. The Travellers could instead hold the agreement in hand and carry out more parts of the contract, perhaps in the hope of getting a better deal or even receiving their bonuses.

Contract Release Negotiations

Situation Indicator + Effect	Situation
0 or less	**Rejection:** The proposal is angrily rejected. DM-2 applies on checks dealing with interaction between the mercenaries and the local government due to resentment and mistrust.
1–3	**Hostility:** The government is hostile to the idea of early release from contract. DM-4 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks regarding this matter until the situation becomes 'Stalled' or better.
4–5	**Quibbles:** The government raises all manner of quibbles over minor points, demands clarification of everything, and rephrases what has been said in a way that changes its meaning. DM-2 applies to Diplomat or Persuade checks until the situation becomes 'Stalled' or better.
6–7	**Stalled:** Talks are ongoing.
8–9	**Penalised Withdrawal:** The unit will be released from contract subject to repayment of 25% of all fees received.
10–11	**Withdrawal:** The unit will be released from contract and permitted to leave without penalty. The licensing agency may have awkward questions for the Travellers.
12–14	**Contract Declared Complete:** The government is willing to consider the contract satisfactorily completed and will pay the Travellers up to the point they cease operations.
15+	**Bonus Payable:** The Travellers somehow convince the government to consider the contract satisfactorily completed and to pay any bonus earned through a good TSI on parts already completed.

The Travellers might find something a little suspicious about the higher results on this table. It is almost as if their withdrawal suits the purposes of the planetary government. This is not quite the case; it is the Real Future faction whose agenda is furthered. The faction is willing to put up the money to pay the Travellers to depart and considers the deal a bargain if it clears the way for further expansion.

DETERMINING SUCCESS LEVEL AND BONUSES

At the end of the mission the Travellers will face a debrief. This may be conducted by the client government, if it still exists, but could be handled by a representative of the licensing agency or the Imperial peacekeeping force. The Travellers will have to answer Three Tough Questions imposed by the Referee. These will be suggested by the Travellers' actions during the ticket. For example, if the Travellers chose to ignore orders or to deceive their client, they will be asked to explain their reasoning. If they failed to complete an objective they will be required to furnish an explanation. The Referee might also ask about some incredibly trivial detail, just to keep the Travellers guessing. After all, not everyone agrees on which are the obviously significant parts of the ticket.

Each Traveller can answer only one Tough Question unless there are insufficient Travellers to answer all questions. The unit commander will usually be able to choose who answers unless it is specifically directed at someone. The Traveller answering a Tough Question must make a Difficult (10+) Leadership check with a bonus or penalty based on the Referee's appraisal of their answer. At the Referee's discretion Admin, Diplomat or Persuade can be used instead of Leadership, depending on the officer's position in the unit and their presentation style.

At the end of the debriefing the unit commander will make their summary comments, abstracted as an Average (8+) Leadership check (this one must be done with the Leadership skill). The total Effect of these four checks is added to the TSI to determine the client's reaction to the mission, as indicated on the Ticket Outcome table.

For example, one of the Travellers ignored orders to secure a location and instead pursued hostiles from the area, so has been asked to explain. The Traveller offers a politely phrased and non-patronising analysis of the situation, which comes down to; 'I was on the spot and my orders were based on a situation that was not what was unfolding. I decided the best way to secure the area was to make an aggressive pursuit and clear hostiles rather than passively holding and perhaps taking long-range fire. I was successful in my effort and the site remained secure.' This may or may not be a true and accurate account of what happened but it is plausible. The Referee decides the explanation is worth DM+2 on the Traveller's Leadership check and the end result is an Effect of +1. This is added to the mission TSI to determine the client's reaction.

TICKET OUTCOME GUIDELINES

The Travellers' unit may be eligible for a bonus if the contract is completed to the satisfaction of the client and might be penalised if it is a disaster. The table on the previous page gives an indication of the client's reaction based on the final TSI score. The client's reaction is based on the TSI score at the end of the mission and the total Effect from checks made during the debriefing. Thus a perfectly executed mission can produce a TSI of 13 but this can be increased (or decreased) by a good presentation of the unit's performance. The client's reaction is based on their perception of the outcome, not necessarily what actually happened.

ELS